

THE POLITICAL & SOCIAL BACKGROUND TO THE  
EDINBURGH PUBLIC COMMISSIONS OF WILLIAM  
TROTTER

Victoria Garrington

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil  
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**THE POLITICAL & SOCIAL BACKGROUND TO THE  
EDINBURGH PUBLIC COMMISSIONS OF WILLIAM  
TROTTER**

**VICTORIA GARRINGTON**

**MPHIL. MUSEUM & GALLERY STUDIES**

**SEPTEMBER 3<sup>RD</sup> 2003**





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### **Abstract**

This thesis is not designed to be an exploration of William Trotter's cabinet-making style and its influences. Instead, it aims firstly to examine the full extent of Trotter's public commissions in Edinburgh, using extant original sources such as estimates, accounts and committee minutes. Previous studies have discussed these commissions, but in many cases the true extent of the work has not been revealed. This is particularly true with regard to Trotter's work at the College of Edinburgh and for the Town Council. This thesis, through an in-depth analysis of each of the Edinburgh public commissions, provides a more thorough assessment of the scale of Trotter's business and its position amongst Edinburgh / Scottish cabinet-making firms.

Secondly, and most importantly, this thesis aims to provide an insight into the relationship between Trotter's public commissions and the political positions he held in Edinburgh during his working life. This is designed to shed light not only on Trotter's own working practices, but also on the system of local government in Edinburgh in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 1 of this thesis provides an introduction to Edinburgh at the start of the nineteenth century, focusing on its architectural development. Chapter 2 introduces the firm of Trotter, outlining the various owners of the business and their partners. Chapter 3 provides information on the workings of the Town Council of Edinburgh, the Merchant Company, and the Dean of Guild Court, these institutions being interrelated. William Trotter's positions on the Town Council and its committees are discussed in the final section of this chapter. Chapter 4 provides a background to the development of the

College of Edinburgh, from foundation until the involvement of W.H. Playfair. Chapter 5 focuses on the College Museum of Natural History. A discussion of the extant sources of information regarding Trotter's work here is followed by a brief history of the collection, before the various phases of this important commission are discussed in detail. The working relationship between W.H. Playfair and Trotter is also examined. The importance of the architect in relation to the development of the New Town of Edinburgh makes their collaboration particularly interesting. Chapter 6 continues the exploration of Trotter's work at the College by discussing his fitting out of the Speculative Society's rooms. Chapter 7 ends the section of the thesis on the College, discussing Trotter's work in areas of the buildings not covered by previous chapters. Chapter 8 covers work completed for the Town Council, including Council buildings, churches and public funerals. Chapter 9 discusses the work carried out at the George Street Assembly Rooms, while Chapter 10 outlines Trotter's preparations for the Royal Visit of George IV to Edinburgh in 1822, particularly his preparation of the Assembly Rooms and Parliament House. Chapter 11 examines work carried out for the Faculty of Advocates in their various libraries.

Chapter 12 concludes the thesis with an extended examination of how Trotter's various Council / committee positions may have led to his receiving such a large number of important and lucrative public commissions. This discussion has wider implications which aid an understanding of the way in which the system of government in Edinburgh during Trotter's lifetime was susceptible to manipulation by merchants and craftsmen for their own ends.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks are due firstly to David Jones for his supervision. Also to James Graham of the Speculative Society for his kind and continuous assistance, and to the society themselves for allowing access to their rooms and records. I am also grateful to the staff of Edinburgh City Archives for their endless record retrievals and advice. The staff of Special Collections at the Library of the University of St Andrews and the Library of the University of Edinburgh, the staff at the National Library of Scotland and at the National Archives are also due thanks.

I must also thank Jojo and Helen for their moral support in times of crisis. Most importantly, thanks are due to Jamie P., who quashed all doubts about the relevance of the thesis to the world by saying, so incisively, ‘...but chairs *are* important – everybody needs to sit down’.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In order to gain a full appreciation of the work of William Trotter in the public buildings of Edinburgh, together with the political and social background to these commissions, it is necessary to understand the Edinburgh of the early to mid-nineteenth century. The rapid expansion and development of the city, both architecturally, socially and economically, together with the way in which it was governed, provided a fertile bed from which political and cabinet-making opportunities could spring for Trotter. Times of rapid growth and change allowed those with an astute business mind to rise to a domination of their trade. Trotter understood these possibilities, and worked the system to spectacular effect.

The development of Edinburgh from the mid-eighteenth century onwards must be seen in contrast to the preceding 150 years, which had seen the city languishing. The removal of James IV to England in 1603 had led to the removal also of the wealthy and important men who made up his Court.<sup>1</sup> In 1707, a further blow was struck to the city when the ancient Parliament was abolished, resulting in a further exodus of the nobility and gentry who supported the city's, and indeed the country's, economy.<sup>2</sup>

In 1752, the first step was taken to put an end to Edinburgh's plight. A pamphlet, produced by the Convention of Royal Burghs, entitled *Proposals for carrying on certain Public Works in the City of Edinburgh*, was produced, which outlined four main steps to be taken:

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<sup>1</sup> Gilbert, W.M. (ed.), *Edinburgh in the Nineteenth Century*, Edinburgh, 1901, p.7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

- (1) To build an exchange 'Upon the ruins on the north side of the High Street'.
- (2) 'To erect upon the ruins in the parliament-close' a building for law courts, the town council, 'several registers', the advocates library, etc.
- (3) To obtain an act of parliament for extending the royalty; to enlarge and beautify the town, by opening new streets to the north and south, removing the markets and shambles, and turning the *North-Loch* into a canal, with walks and terrasses on each side.
- (4) That the expense of these public works should be defrayed by a national contribution.<sup>3</sup>

So, what prompted this move? It may be attributed partly to the ideas of the Enlightenment, which flourished in Scotland through the work of men such as the philosophers David Hume and Professor Dugald Stewart (of the College of Edinburgh). Ideals of order and rationality, central to the new way of thinking, were obviously not embodied by the ramshackle arrangement of the Old Town of Edinburgh. Nor was social propriety, an aspect of the Enlightenment which was peculiarly prominent in Scotland. Social propriety was seen as intricately linked with the civility of urban culture.<sup>4</sup> Propriety and civility could not thrive in a city which had progressed architecturally very little since medieval times.

The Grand Tour was also a factor. Conflict on the Continent had necessitated those who wished to undertake a Grand Tour to set their sights on their own country. This led to an influx of students to Scottish Universities, perpetuating their position as central in the Enlightenment movement. These visitors, who would, in peaceful

circumstances, be admiring the antiquities of Italy and the rest of Europe, also saw the potential of Edinburgh, through its position, surrounded by hills and with large areas of undeveloped land, to be an embodiment of Classical ideals. Such ideals were compatible with the ideas of the Enlightenment, order and rationality being paramount in both.

However, the development of Edinburgh must not be seen purely as an experiment in rationalism and Classicism. To a great extent, the expansion was planned in order to revive the economic fortunes of the city. The 1752 proposals sum up the benefits of the expansion thus:

The national advantages which a populous capital must necessarily produce, are obvious. A great concourse of people brought within a small compass, occasions a much greater consumption than the same number would do dispersed over a wide country. As the consumption is greater so it is quicker, more discernable. Hence follows a more rapid circulation of money and other commodities, the great spring which gives motion to general industry and improvement. The examples set by the Capital, the nation will soon follow'<sup>5</sup>

These economic motives were not at odds with Enlightenment ideals, Hume and others writing extensively on the possibilities of economic progress.<sup>6</sup> Economic

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<sup>3</sup> *Proposals for carrying on certain Public Works in the City of Edinburgh*, in Youngson, A.J., *The Making of Classical Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1966, p.3.

<sup>4</sup> Berry, Christopher J., *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment*, Edinburgh, 1997, p.17.

<sup>5</sup> *Proposals*, in Youngson, Op Cit, p.11.

<sup>6</sup> Hume's *Political Discourses* of 1752 discussed such topics.

progress also became an actual possibility at this time, as the difficulties caused by the Union of 1707 began to dissipate, and its economic benefits began to be felt.<sup>7</sup>

It can be seen that Edinburgh, at the time of the 1752 *Proposals*, was ripe for change. This change occurred rapidly. By 1753, an Act had been passed entitled:

An Act for Erecting Several Public buildings in the City of Edinburgh; to empower the Trustees therein to be mentioned to purchase lands for that Purpose; and also for Widening and Enlarging the streets of the said City, and Certain Avenues Leading thereto.<sup>8</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this study to detail every development as it occurred, but it is useful to outline some of the more significant developments in order to provide a context in which Trotter may be examined. The draining of the North Loch in 1769, together with erection of the North Bridge (completed in 1772) provided the basis for all future expansion, as they created a link between the Old Town, centred around the High Street, and the open lands on the north side of the North Loch. With these links established, the building could begin of homes suitable for the well-to-do who would be required to be drawn to the city in order to support the economy. One of the earliest developments was George Square, built in the 1760s, although this lay outside the Royalty of Edinburgh at this time. In 1769, James Craig's extensive New Town plans were finally accepted, providing a blueprint for future housing development.

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<sup>7</sup> Berry, *Op Cit*, p.10. One of the objectives of the Union was to allow Scots unrestricted access to English markets, thereby facilitating economic development.

<sup>8</sup> 1753 Improvement Act in Youngson, *Op cit*, p.52.

As the wealthy middle and upper classes were drawn back to the capital, further money was invested in private housing developments, perpetuating expansion. These newcomers also provided a market for the consumption-oriented industries that constituted the city's economy.<sup>9</sup> Ladies in domestic service, boot-makers, dressmakers and tailors, clerks, laundry workers, blacksmiths, porters, printers and publishers, and of course cabinet-makers and upholsterers, flourished in such circumstances, as did a large number of writers and advocates.<sup>10</sup>

As the educated and well-to-do flocked to the city, there was also a growing need for a range of public and private buildings providing services and entertainment. The Theatre Royal opened in 1786, and the George Street Assembly Rooms opened their doors the following year. The growth of clubs and debating societies, encouraged by Enlightenment ideas, led to new buildings being erected to house them (e.g. the Speculative Society, instituted in 1764, whose first premises were within the area of the College of Edinburgh). The expanding reputation of Edinburgh as a seat of learning encouraged the development of the new College buildings, begun in 1789. These new buildings were arranged to face the South Bridge, begun in 1785, which linked the outlying Southern Districts of the city to the New Town. George IV Bridge, completed in 1834, provided the final link between all areas of the city.

A number of prominent public buildings were commissioned, serving both as functioning spaces and as decorative embellishments to the thriving capital. The façade of the Old Parliament House, which had been erected in 1632-40, was

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<sup>9</sup> Youngson, *Op Cit*, p.42.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*



radically re-modelled.<sup>11</sup> Register House, at the northern end of the North Bridge, was commenced in 1774, although it was not completed for many years. The city gained new and magnificent churches, such as St George's in Charlotte Square, finished in 1824.

Alongside these developments, embellishments of a more practical nature were also underway. Leith, which had become the foremost port in Scotland, was extensively remodelled in order to deal with the amount of shipping passing through it. The Forth-Clyde and the Edinburgh to Glasgow Union Canal, the latter opening in 1822, added to the transport network that was essential for economic growth.

The abundance of possibilities for planning huge schemes and monumental public buildings attracted the very best new and established architects such as Robert Adam, W.H. Playfair, Robert Reid and James Craig. The rapid and extensive nature of growth in the city meant that these architects had the scope to really leave their mark on the capital within their lifetimes.

The growth of Edinburgh was partly due to private investment in housing, but the Town Council appear to have borne the brunt of the costs. The returns projected for each development did not always live up to expectations, and this, combined with a system of local government which was devoid of accountability, meant that by 1833 (the year of Trotter's death), the city debt was £410,000.<sup>12</sup> The sweeping Reform Bills, which began to be introduced in 1832, meant that such extravagant spending was curbed, and by the end of the century Edinburgh was financially stable again.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.133.



It is against the pre-Reform background of lavish spending, rapid expansion, economic development and influx of the middle and upper classes that Trotter's ascendancy should be seen. It was a period during which a person with an astute business sense and an eye for new opportunities could flourish, and Trotter had these qualities in abundance.

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<sup>12</sup> Gilbert, *Op Cit*, p.102.

## **Chapter 2: William Trotter and the Family Firm**

By the time that William Trotter joined the family firm in 1797 it had already existed, in various incarnations, for approximately fifty years. It appears to have been founded by a 'Thomas Trotter', who became a member of the Merchant Company in 1748. He was the father of William Trotter, who became a Burgess and Guild Brother (and, presumably, a member of the Merchant Company) in 1797.<sup>1</sup> There is some confusion with regard to the family tree, due to the fact that there was more than one branch of the Trotter family exercising the profession of merchant in Edinburgh.<sup>2</sup> However, the *Roll of Edinburgh Burgesses & Guild Brethren 1701-1841* clearly states that 'William Trotter' was admitted as a Burgess and Guild Brother in 1797 in right of his father 'Thomas Trotter'. It seems likely that it was this Thomas who was made a member of the Merchant Company in 1748, the same year as a 'Robert Young'. The first evidence of the commercial activity of these men finds them collaborating on an upholstery commission for William Hall of Dunglass.<sup>3</sup> Although this work is dated to 1747, a year before either were made members of the Company, it was quite commonplace for merchants and craftsmen to delay payment of Burgess, Guildry and / or Company membership dues for as long as possible, in order to save money.

Although the sources (listed in footnote no. 1) list a range of 'Thomas's and 'William's, the two mentioned above seem to be the most likely candidates as members of the firm. Thomas appears as a member of the Company at approximately

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<sup>1</sup> The major sources of information used for this study were; Boog Watson, C.B. (ed.), *Roll of Edinburgh Burgesses & Guild-Brethren 1701-1841*, Edinburgh, 1929; Bamford, F., *A Dictionary of Edinburgh Wrights and Furniture Makers 1660-1840*, Furniture History, 1983; and Pryke, S., 'At the Sign of the Pelican', *Regional Furniture*, vol. VI, 1992, pp 10-21. These sources conflict on some points, but the family tree outlined above seems to be the most logical.

<sup>2</sup> Pryke, Op Cit, p.10.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

the right time for having completed the Dunglass commission (and in the same year as Young), and William, becoming a Burgess and Guild Brother in 1797, would have been well placed to have taken over the family firm, as it is known that he did, in 1805 (see below). The amount of time between the two men taking up their profession (1748-1797) also suggests a father-son relationship.

The fact that the members of the firm became members of the Merchant Company rather than the Incorporated Trades highlights the nature of their work. They were not themselves craftsmen. Instead, they ran a business which, in its heyday, included the sale of upholstery (including blankets and carpets) and cabinet-work, the directing of funerals and the letting of furnished properties in the New Town. Such an all-encompassing business was not exceptional. For example, the Glasgow firm of Cleland Jack and Paterson, who were that city's leading cabinet-makers until 1830, provided upholstery and cabinet-making services, along with the furnishing of funerals and wider commercial interests such as building and property leasing.<sup>4</sup>

Initially, under the name of 'Young and Trotter', Robert Young and Thomas Trotter focused on the upholstery trade, working from a warehouse '...at the Pelican within the Head of the Luckenbooths opposite to the Tolbooth', at the heart of the High Street.<sup>5</sup> From 1752 to 1754, the firm had an association with a James Caddell, from this point on offering undertaking services, which often proved lucrative.<sup>6</sup> In 1764 the firm took on another useful partner, William Cheap, allowing them to branch out into

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<sup>4</sup> Blair, C. and Jones, D., 'Furnishing the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow Style, 1809', *Regional Furniture*, vol. V, 1991, pp 86-92, p.90.

<sup>5</sup> Pryke, Op Cit, p.10.

<sup>6</sup> Bamford, Op Cit, p.115.

Persian and Scotch carpets.<sup>7</sup> The designing of patterns and the dying of yarns were all carried out by the firm themselves, skills which were subsequently put to use in the making of blankets.<sup>8</sup> In c1774 the firm began to describe themselves as cabinet-makers and upholsterers, rather than just the latter.<sup>9</sup> This move was made after James Hamilton joined the business.<sup>10</sup>

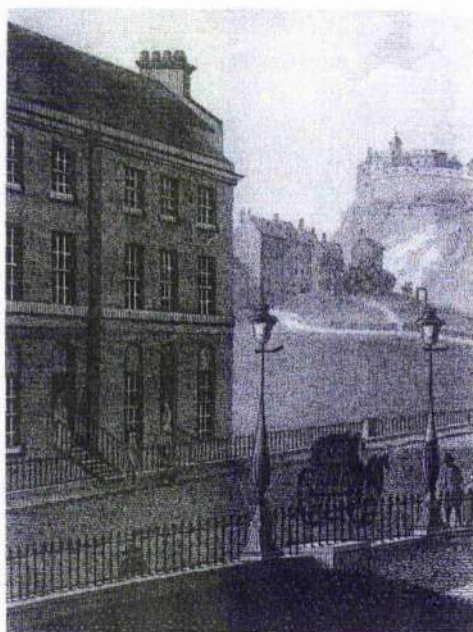


Fig.1: Detail of 1807 engraving by J.C. Nattes showing the Princes Street premises of Young, Trotter and Hamilton (from Bamford, F., *A Dictionary of Edinburgh Wrights and Furniture Makers, 1660-1840*, Furniture History, 1983, plate 79).

In 1772, the firm moved to the south side of Princes Street near North Bridge, where they had already been building workshops.<sup>11</sup> An engraving of this end of the street by J.C. Nattes, produced in 1807, shows the portion of the firm's premises that faced the street (see Fig.1). The view seems to have been retrospective, as the sign above the

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<sup>7</sup> Pryke, *Op Cit*, p.14.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Bamford, *Op cit*, p.115.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* Pryke (*Op Cit*) dates this partnership to 1790.

<sup>11</sup> Pryke, *Op Cit.*, p.14.



entrance still reads 'Young, Trotter and Hamilton', this partnership having been dissolved before the date of the engraving. Alternatively, the old sign may have been retained after Hamilton's departure. A view of Princes Street by Nasmyth, *The Building of the Royal Institution* (see Fig.2), shows a side view of the premises in the background. It can be seen that there is a house fronting the street with a wareroom behind, at the back of which stands the wood-yard, where timber is being stored. It seems likely that the workshops were situated below the wareroom, adjacent to the wood-yard.<sup>12</sup>

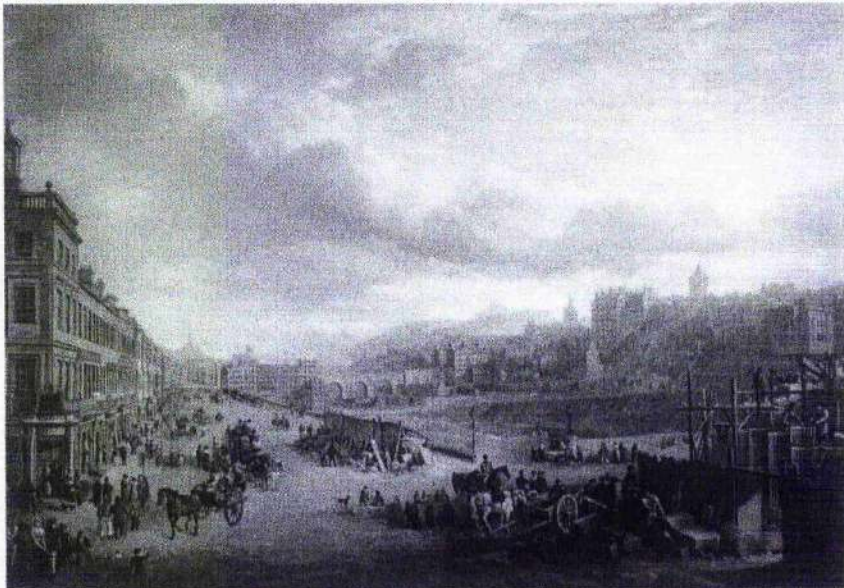


Fig.2: Painting by Alexander Nasmyth, *The Building of the Royal Institution*, featuring Trotter's premises in the background (National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh).

Youngson, in *The Making of Classical Edinburgh*, discusses these workshops at length, as their erection formed part of the long-running debate in the city regarding building on the south side of Princes Street. In 1769, John Home, a Coachbuilder,

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<sup>12</sup> Information provided by David Jones of the University of St Andrews.

acquired an area of land on the south side of the street, near to North Bridge.<sup>13</sup> Home planned a street, 'St Ann's Street', leading away from Princes Street, west of the bridge. Youngson states that in June 1770, Home, along with Young and Trotter, applied for additional land west of that already owned by them.<sup>14</sup> This implies that Young and Trotter had already erected premises in the area in 1769 along with Home. The Town Council feued the ground, with the proviso that any building should not rise above the level of Princes Street.<sup>15</sup> This caused an outcry among the New Town feuars, resulting in lengthy legal action. In the course of this, it was discovered that Home had bargained with Young and Trotter (amongst others) after he had feued the land in 1769.<sup>16</sup> The eventual upshot of the debate was a decree arbitral in 1776. Under this, houses / premises currently under construction were to be completed, with only a few workshops (below the level of Princes Street) to be allowed west of a certain point (approximately the present-day location of the Waverley Steps).<sup>17</sup> The land westward as far as Hanover Street was to be kept as a pleasure ground, an Act of Parliament of 1816 extending this area.<sup>18</sup> The debate reared its head on subsequent occasions, particularly when William Trotter was in power as Lord Provost, but the opposition stood firm.

A description of the buildings in St Ann's Street, dating from 1817, suggests that they were somewhat insalubrious:

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<sup>13</sup> Youngson, A.J., *The Making of Classical Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1966, p.86.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.87.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.90.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

The whole was reared and finished in the meanest and most irregular manner, presenting to the view over the parapet wall of the North bridge a range of dirty and deformed chimney tops and of heavy roofs, in which the most curious eye could scarcely discover any feature of the sublime or beautiful. They were occupied, too, exclusively by keepers of ale houses and small shops, or by chairmen<sup>19</sup>, porters or common mechanics; and, in particular, by a numerous and exalted colony of operative tailors...<sup>20</sup>

The fact that the decree arbitral of 1776 insisted that workshops then under construction had to be built below the level of Princes Street, together with the fact that the passage above suggests that the workshops of St Ann's Street could only be viewed from the North Bridge, makes the situation of the firm's workshops below the wareroom likely.

The firm's wareroom is described by Thomas Frognall Dibdin, in his work *Tour in the North Counties of England and in Scotland*, of 1838. He describes it as '...one of the noblest repositories in England (sic.)...for Upholstery ware', and goes on to say that:

The locality of this great upholstery Warehouse is rather singular. It is on the ground floor: lighted by a skylight. It is of great length and intercepted by rectangular vistas filled with Mahogany and rosewood objects of temptation,

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<sup>19</sup> This most likely refers to sedan chair carriers, as opposed to chair makers.

<sup>20</sup> Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. I, in Youngson, Op Cit, p.91.

in all their seductive variety, chairs, tables, beaufets, desks, commodes...carry away your heart and your purse together.<sup>21</sup>

A letter written by the firm in 1781 indicates that at least until this point, the upholstery warehouse in the Luckenbooths was maintained in addition to the Princes Street complex.<sup>22</sup>

1797 saw William Trotter joining the family firm, consequently known as Young, Trotter, Hamilton and Trotter.<sup>23</sup> By 1801, Hamilton had either died / retired, and the firm was known for the next four years as Young and Trotters.<sup>24</sup> On the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1805, it was announced in the Caledonian Mercury that William had 'succeeded to the Old Establishment' of Young and Trotters, of which he 'had been for nine years the Junior Partner'.<sup>25</sup>

After William Trotter's death in 1833, the firm was managed until 1840 by James Blackadder under the commercial title of 'Heirs of William Trotter'.<sup>26</sup> William's son, Charles Trotter, then lent his name to the family business until it finally folded in 1852.<sup>27</sup> The firm had enjoyed approximately 100 years at the forefront of the cabinet-making business, producing work for the country houses of the Scottish (and other) nobility, the fashionable middle class New Town tenants of Edinburgh, the public spaces of the city, and even the Royal Family. The body of work left behind, although

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas Frognall Dibdin's *Tour in the North Counties of England and in Scotland*, 1838, quoted in Bamford, *Dictionary*, p.116.

<sup>22</sup> Pryke, *Op Cit*, p.17.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Bamford, *Op Cit*, p.115.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*



now fragmentary and dispersed to a large extent, serves as a monument to the craft and business skills of a cabinet-making dynasty.

### **Chapter 3: The Government of Edinburgh**

#### **The Town Council of Edinburgh**

In order to understand the way in which Trotter gained important commissions from the Town Council, it is necessary to understand the way in which the Council worked, namely its mode of election, the extent of its powers, the way in which it organised the work necessary in the city, and the way in which it accounted for its expenditure. A brief outline of the aspects of the Council most pertinent to Trotter's own political life will be sketched in this section, after which there will follow a discussion of the Merchant Company and the Dean of Guild Court. These latter organisations were both closely tied to the workings of the Council, and had Trotter amongst their ranks. Finally, the Council positions held by Trotter will be discussed. The most useful source of information regarding all aspects of the workings of the Council and related organisations is the Town Council Minutes, held by the Edinburgh City Archives.

The Council's lengthy election process took place in the autumn of each year. The only voters in the election were the Council themselves, which included the 'Old' Council of the previous year, who sat with those currently holding positions throughout the year. The 14 Deacons of the Incorporated Trades were the first to be elected. Each trade gave in a 'leet' (or list) of six candidates approved of by the trade. From this, the current Town Council selected three candidates to make up a short leet, from which each trade could choose their preferred candidate. In this way, the Council had total control over who would be accepted into a position of power. From this 14, a main council of six would then be chosen by the Council. Three merchant and two trades councillors would then be elected. They would join with the Council

Deacons and the current Provost, Bailies, Dean of Guild and Treasurer, to form the new Council of Merchants and Crafts. The whole Council would then meet for the most important part of the elections – the selection of a new Lord Provost.

Throughout the elections, various laws and acts were read in the presence of the voters, setting out the proper procedure for the elections. The interpretation of these laws and acts was often rather loose, and those pertaining to the election of Lord Provost were no exception. The relevant minute for the 1824 election illustrates this:

The Chapter of the Sett (i.e. the laws of the burgh) entitled ‘Leets for Magistrates’ and so much of Lord Hay’s decreet arbitral as Finds, Decerns, and Declares that according to the Sett of the Town there must be three persons in every leet for the several offices of Provost, Dean of Guild and Treasurer, and twelve persons in the leets for Bailies, but it does not determine whether the said leets should contain one and twenty different persons, and the usage appears in the contrary which therefore ought to prevail....together with the Act of Council dated the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 1658 anent the continuance of the Lord Provost, Bailies, Dean of Guild and Treasurer in their respective offices were read...<sup>1</sup>

This passage raises a few interesting points. There is no mention of the origin of the leet for the position of Lord Provost, but it seems likely that this was drawn from the opinion of the existing Council. The section of the passage regarding the major Council positions and the possibility of leets for these containing the same names is

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<sup>1</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 190, 7 July 1824-24 Nov. 1824, 24 Sept. 1824, p.222.

particularly interesting. Through this interpretation of the law, a person could have a number of attempts at entering the Council if not successful with their first choice of position. The idea of the 'usage' prevailing suggests that a law may be wrongly interpreted, as long as it has been so for a number of years. These points, together with the possible continuance of those in the highest offices, combine to show how the existing legislation was manipulated in order that the current Council could keep a tight grip on its power, only letting into the fold those who conformed to its ideals.

As people were elected to each Council position, that position's previous occupier became a member of the 'Old Council' who sat with the new. This was a further safeguard of the ideals of the Council. It also meant that as 'Old' Council members resigned / died / moved away, there was a 'way in' to the Council for new blood. It appears from the Minutes that quite often those who were new to local government would be appointed at this level (being voted in by the Council), and would then work their way up to a position on the 'new' Council. It was also a fairly regular occurrence that one of the 'Old' Council members would be absent during election time, with a new face taking their place. Quite often, this new face would then appear on leets for minor Council positions. In this way, entry to the Council was further limited and controlled.

The Town Council also helped to maintain larger power structures. For example, a meeting was called on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1826 for the purpose of electing a representative of the City to the next Parliament. The Lord Provost, after 'An Act for the More effectually preventing of Bribery and Corruption in the election of Members to serve in Parliament' had been read, proposed William Dundas (Lord Clerk Register

of Scotland, and one of the King's Privy Council). Dundas was elected by the Council for the 7<sup>th</sup> time. Only one member dissented.<sup>2</sup>

A position on the Town Council automatically led to close involvement in its lucrative / high profile ventures. For example, in 1824, two Bailies, the Treasurer and one of the Trades Councillors were elected as Directors of the Edinburgh Joint Stock Water Company at the end of the elections.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in 1826, the gentlemen appointed to be Managers of the Charity Workhouse for the year included the Lord Provost.<sup>4</sup> A close eye was thereby kept on the Council's interests, and the Council members themselves benefited through contact with powerful city players.

Members of the Town Council also benefited greatly from the lack of controls on expenditure, aided by the fact that the auditors of the City's accounts were members themselves. The Provost received, during Trotter's term, between £800 and £1000 per year for 'Supporting the Dignity of the Chair'.<sup>5</sup> Vast quantities of money were spent on lavish banquets and drinking sessions to celebrate various Council events. For example, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 1826, the Chamberlain was authorised to pay a Mr. Henry M. Gibb £170.4d '...being the amount of the last election dinner bill'.<sup>6</sup> An illuminating section of the accounts for the 1805-1806 period, included in the Minutes for the 29<sup>th</sup> of July 1807, states that the total expenditure on 'Petty Disbursements' was £1625.11.8. Of this, £587.2.1 went on 'Tavern Expenses', £11.17.6 went on 'Preserving the Public Peace' and £5 went on 'Church Music'.<sup>7</sup> Various rules were

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<sup>2</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 197, 15 March 1826-19 July 1826, 12 June 1826, p.336.

<sup>3</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 190, 7 July 1824-24 Nov. 1824, 6 Oct. 1824, p.234.

<sup>4</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 198, 26 July 1826- 29 Nov. 1826, 2 Aug. 1826, p.55.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 13 Sept. 1826, p.198.

<sup>6</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 197, 15 March 1826-19 July 1826, 7 June 1826, p.323.

<sup>7</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 148, 20 May 1807- 21 Oct. 1807, 29 July 1807, p.152.

introduced in an attempt to be seen to be limiting frivolous expenditure, but these were often not adhered to, as the Council was self-regulating, and benefited greatly from such spending.

The main benefit of being a member of the Town Council for tradesmen and merchants was the monopoly this allowed them of work for the Council within their sphere of expertise. Rather than taking in competitive estimates from a range of workmen, the Council would often simply hand over work to the relevant Council member, often without keeping a close check on the cost. For example, a Minute of the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 1807 states that the Chamberlain was authorised to pay 18 accounts to a 'Deacon Paton'.<sup>8</sup> It is unclear what the Deacon's specific trade was, but he had carried out work for a wide variety of Council buildings, including the High School, the Water Department and the coal-weighing house. The work ranged from small jobs costing c£6 to sizeable contracts worth c£148.<sup>9</sup> On many occasions, work was carried out for the Council by its members without official sanction, a practice which flourished due to the:

...vague way in which orders were given for carrying on Public Works, and the difficulty that often occurred in getting those accounts properly attested...<sup>10</sup>

As with the Council's expenditure on entertainments, various rules were introduced in order to give the appearance of taking a stance against such manipulation of the

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<sup>8</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 147, 14 Jan. 1807-13 May 1807, 14 Jan. 1807, p.28.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 148, 14 Jan. 1807-13 May 1807, 18 Feb. 1807, pp 114-115, Report of the Council Bailie.

system, but these were often ignored, as they benefited a large proportion of the Council members.

It can be seen from this discussion why a position on the Town Council was so sought after. The mode of election, together with the remit of the Council, meant that the major institutions of the City were in the firm grip of a powerful few. A Town Council position, through this involvement in the management of the City's affairs, allowed a lucky few to make social connections with the best of Edinburgh society, in addition to the useful connections made within the Council itself. Financial security was also assured by gaining such a position, as it allowed a personal monopoly of one's trade / line of business. A life of fine dining and drinking was also guaranteed. This life of prosperity, both financial and social, was maintained by the corrupt election process, which allowed only those in support of the system to enter it. This mode of local government was swept away by the first Reform Act of 1832, but during almost the whole of Trotter's lifetime, it remained as it had been for centuries – a corrupt system which could benefit enormously those with the ability to enter it.

## **The Merchant Company**

The predecessor of the Merchant Company of Edinburgh was the Guildry, whose first extant minute dates back to 1403. The Guildry was made up of those inhabitants of the city who were Burgesses (possessing the freedom of the city) and Guild Brethren. Both these titles were purchased from the Guildry, with subsequent annual fees being paid. In return, exclusive trading privileges were given within the limits of the city. The Town Council at this time was merely an elected committee of the Guildry.<sup>1</sup> In this way, the merchant class monopolised the trading carried out in / from Edinburgh, and also controlled wider city affairs.

In 1469, the right of the Guildry to elect the officers of the burgh was taken away by an Act of Parliament. The retiring Council were now to choose their successors, and these old and new Councils together were to choose the Magistrates (Provost, Bailies, Dean of Guild and Treasurer).<sup>2</sup> One person from each of the fourteen Incorporated Trades of City was now also allowed to vote in the elections. The Guildry were thereby deprived of any exclusive and direct right to elect the Town Council, and the 'Dean of Guild' (the highest officer of the Guild) was now a member of the Council, and was not voted for by the Guildry themselves.<sup>3</sup>

These new arrangements led to a struggle for power between the merchants and the Incorporated Trades. The Decreet Arbitral of James VI in 1583 was designed to reconcile these issues. Those in the trades were to be admitted as Guild Brethren

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, R., *Edinburgh Dean of Guild Court*, Edinburgh, 1896, p.7.

<sup>2</sup> Robertson, D. and Wood, M., *Castle & Town: Chapters in the History of the Royal Burgh of Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1928, p.57.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.58.



along with the merchants. The Town Council was to consist of 25 members. Those who were elected as Magistrates were required to be merchants, with the remaining council positions held by ten merchants and eight people from the trades.<sup>4</sup>

The 1583 Decreet Arbitral also clarified the trading privileges that were to be allowed to the Merchant Burgesses and the Guild Brethren.<sup>5</sup> A Merchant Burgess, whose annual fees were lower than those of a Guild Brother, could sell: coarse cloths; oil; soap; butter; fruit; eggs; figs; raisins; fish; vinegar, and other 'non-luxury' items.<sup>6</sup> A Guild Brother, on the other hand, was allowed to sell more costly wares such as: wine; wax; woad for dyeing; spices; silks; cloths of gold / silver; and fine foreign woollens.<sup>7</sup>

As the nomination of the Town Council and of their head, the Dean of Guild, had passed out of the direct control of the Guildry, and their powers and privileges were now to be shared with those from the Incorporated Trades, the Guild Brethren felt a need to protect their own monopolies and to provide financial support for their fellow brethren and their families. 'The Company of Merchants of the City of Edinburgh' was therefore established by Royal Charter in 1681. This Company grew to be the dominant, monopolising force not only in respect of the trade of the city, but also in respect of the control of it.

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<sup>4</sup> Heron, A., *The Merchant Company of Edinburgh – Its Rise and Progress*, Edinburgh, 1903, pp 10-11.

<sup>5</sup> A Merchant Burgess was a person who had paid the dues of Burgess-ship, and wished to exercise the vocation of merchant, as opposed to the vocation of craftsman (the latter requiring membership of a Trade Incorporation).

<sup>6</sup> Robertson & Wood, *Op Cit*, pp259-260.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*.

Although the Decreet Arbitral of 1583 had taken the power to elect the Magistrates and Council out of the hands of the Guildry in principal, in practice a significant percentage of those who were elected to the Council were members of the Company. Heron, in his history of the Company, outlines the most important aspect of this trend:

The happy precedent was thus formed, which has been from time to time followed, of the master's chair qualifying for promotion to the Civic Chair.<sup>8</sup>

Between 1800 and 1850, there were five Masters of the Merchant Company who progressed to become Provost: William Creech; William Trotter; Walter Brown; Sir James Spittal; and Adam Black.<sup>9</sup>

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Company had grown to be a dominant economic and political force in the City. It invested money gained from entry dues and donations in lucrative commercial enterprises. In 1696, the Company invested £1200 in the 'Company of Scotland trading to Africa and the Indies'.<sup>10</sup> By 1700, the Company was represented on the General Council of the trading company.<sup>11</sup>

'Donations' to the Company were seen as an opportunity to win their favour, which obviously held great weight in the political arena. In September 1767, Sir Lawrence Dundas donated £500 to the charitable arm of the company, and within the month, was chosen by the Town Council to represent the city in Parliament.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Heron, *Op Cit*, p.21.

<sup>9</sup> From comparison of the lists of office holders in Heron, *Op Cit*, p.390, and Gilbert, W.M. (ed.), *Edinburgh in the Nineteenth Century*, Edinburgh, 1901, p.196.

<sup>10</sup> Heron, *Op Cit*, p.63.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.97.

The Town Council recognised the necessity of consulting the Company with regard to the progress of the city, such was its sway with the powerful city players. Plans for city improvements, such as the proposals for the south Bridge in 1785, were given to the Company for scrutiny.<sup>13</sup> Heron states, in reference to Council discussions regarding the city's water supply, that:

It would appear to have been regarded as the prudent course that they should have early notice of and be consulted as to any important project of the municipality.<sup>14</sup>

The Company was also a part of the public life of the city. As well as its high-profile charitable concerns (such as the foundation of the Merchant Maiden Hospital, etc.), the Company was often involved in public processions, such as that to celebrate the laying of the foundation stone of the military works to defend the Forth in 1808. The Company met with the Provost and other city Magistrates at the Assembly Rooms of Leith and processed to the works.<sup>15</sup> When George IV visited the city in 1822, the Master and Assistants of the Company were appointed as a deputation to wait upon the King and present an address.<sup>16</sup>

The level of power wielded by the Company was criticised by some. Henry Cockburn, in his *Memorials of His Time* (published in 1856), describes the Company thus:

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.141.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.106.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.161.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.183.

Individually, its Magnates were very good men, but publicly its 'Master' and his 'Twelve assistants' were a King and a House of Lords without the Commons.<sup>17</sup>

The hold of the Merchant Company over the affairs of Edinburgh was broken by the Reform Acts, the first of which was introduced in 1832. The exclusive privileges of the Company with regard to trade were broken by these acts. Ironically, the Company had been major players in the drive for burgh reform. In this, they were motivated to a great extent by self-interest, desiring an opportunity to gain direct representation on the Council, and to elect their own Dean of Guild. Trotter's term as Master of the Company came in 1819, before the upheavals of Reform, in the 'glory days' of the Company, when its influence was felt throughout the city.

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<sup>17</sup> Henry Cockburn, quoted in *Ibid.*, p.171.

## **The Dean of Guild Court**

The History of the Dean of Guild Court is inextricably linked to that of the Merchant's Guild and the Town Council. Initially, the Court was composed of all members of the Guild, under the leadership of the Dean of Guild. However, the 1469 Act (mentioned above in relation to the Merchant Company) took away the rights of the Guildry to elect the officers of the burgh, the Dean of Guild becoming an officer of the Incorporation, and his Court consequently being annexed to the Town Council.<sup>1</sup>

An Act of Council of 1500-1501 allowed the Provost, Bailies and Council the right to control meetings of the Guild Court.<sup>2</sup> In 1584-1585, the Town Council laid down rules to govern the manner of election of the Dean of Guild and the other members of the Court. Members were to be men of good reputation and experience, to be Guild Brethren, and to have served for at least three years on the Town Council.<sup>3</sup> One could not be a member of the Town Council and the Guild Court simultaneously (although the reality of the Court as a function of the Council meant that a Guild Court member held some sway in the Council). The Dean of Guild of the previous year was also to be a member of the current year's court.<sup>4</sup> In a similar way to the practice of having an 'Old Council' contingent in the Town Council, this provision allowed for the control of the Court by those previously in power, maintaining the status quo.

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, D. and Wood, M., *Castle and Town: Chapters in the History of the Royal Burgh of Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1928, p.57.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.213.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp 214-215.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

The Decreet Arbitral of 1583 (as mentioned above) dictated that the Dean of Guild was to have a council of six, made up of three merchants and three craftsmen.<sup>5</sup> This was despite the origin of the Court as an arm of the Guildry (who had traditionally not allowed the trades to obtain membership). It is not entirely clear whether this council constituted the Court, or instead were an addition to it. The Dean of Guild Court Minute Book 1809-1812 (held by the Edinburgh City Archives) suggests that the former was the case, as a minute of the 19<sup>th</sup> of October 1809 includes a list of office-bearers:

- Dean of Guild – William Tennant
- Old Dean of Guild – William Trotter
- Other members: William Sibbald (Mason)

John Dickson (Mason)

James Brown (Wright)

Alexander Smith (Merchant)

Neil Kyrie (Merchant)<sup>6</sup>

This conforms to the Decreet Arbitral by including three craftsmen and three merchants (Trotter, the Old Dean of Guild, being the third merchant).

So what was the function of this Court, originally an arm of the Guildry, but subsequently annexed to the Town Council, during Trotter's time? Shepherd, in his book *Modern Athens Displayed in a Series of Views: or Edinburgh in the Nineteenth Century*, originally published in 1831, describes its function as:

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.61.

...having cognisance of all the buildings erected within the jurisdiction of the city, none of which can be built without a licence from the Dean, who also has the regulation of weights and measures, and sees that no tradesmen exercise their profession unless they be freemen.<sup>7</sup>

The Dean of Guild Court Minute Book 1809-1812 spans the period during which Trotter was Old Dean of Guild. It provides an insight into the range of work carried out by the Court. It appears that the bulk of work undertaken during this period concerns the settling of disputes between 'neighbours' (or freeman inhabitants of the burgh). For example, a Minute of the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 1809 notes the disagreement between a William Murray and a John McKenzie. Murray had petitioned the court due to McKenzie's painting of his name (presumably as a shop / trade sign) on the former's property.<sup>8</sup> A Minute of the 28<sup>th</sup> of September of the same year records a dispute between a Mr Ferguson and a Mr Curtis. The Court in this instance decided to:

...ordain the said Charles Curtis Defender to restore instantly to the petitioner his entry to his garrets and to remove the encroachments he has made upon the common stair...<sup>9</sup>

Although instances of Court decisions regarding weights and measures and unfree men, mentioned by Shepherd, do not appear in this particular minute book, there are

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<sup>6</sup> E.C.A., SL144/36, Dean of Guild Court Minute Book 1809-1812, 19 Oct. 1809.

<sup>7</sup> Shepherd, T.H., *Modern Athens Displayed in a Series of Views: or Edinburgh in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1969 (Original edition 1831), p.7.

<sup>8</sup> E.C.A., SL144/36, Dean of Guild Court Minute Book 1809-1812, 29 June 1809.



instances of licences to build being granted. For example, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 1809, the committee for building the New Assembly Rooms at Leith were granted a 'warrant to build'.<sup>10</sup>

A distinction between the functions of the Dean of Guild Court and the Dean of Guild himself as part of the Town Council is not mentioned explicitly in any text / minutes, but he does appear to have had a discrete remit in addition to his position as head of the Court. This discrete work was noted in the Town Council Minutes. While the Court dealt with disputes, regulations, permissions and transgressions of the rules of Burgess-ship, the Dean as a member of Council appears to have been concerned with the affairs of the city's churches.<sup>11</sup> A Town Council Minute of the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 1826 noted that there had been read to the Council:

...a report by the Dean of Guild, to whom was remitted to confer with the reverend Clergy, a petition for the Managers of the royal Infirmary craving a public-collection at the church-doors in behalf of that Institution.<sup>12</sup>

A Minute of the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 1826 noted that a petition had been remitted to the Dean from a Dame Mary Peter, '...for liberty to place a small mural tablet on the wall of the Greyfriar's Church.'<sup>13</sup>, while on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 1809, a petition was

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 28 Sept. 1809.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 2 Oct. 1809.

<sup>11</sup> It should also be noted that Town Council Minutes include a list at the start of each minute of the office-holders. The Dean of Guild and Old Dean of Guild are listed, but the Dean's Council is not specifically mentioned. This suggests that the Council and Court were one and the same, while the Dean and the Old Dean functioned in addition to this as members of the Town Council.

<sup>12</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 198, 26 July 1826-29 Nov. 1826, 8 Nov. 1826, p.378.

<sup>13</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 200, 6 Dec. 1826-4 Apr. 1827, 13 Dec. 1826, p.35.

remitted to the Dean from Trotter himself, ‘...craving a grant of burial ground.’<sup>14</sup> At a time when church-going was still very much part of everyday life (as evidenced by the building of a number of new churches as the New Town grew), and the Church as an institution still held a great deal of respect and power, this control over a range of church affairs indicates the high status of the Dean of Guild.

In a similar way to the Dean, the Old Dean of Guild seems to have had a remit that went beyond Court affairs, leading to involvement in Town Council matters. For example, during the election of October 1809 (when Trotter obtained the position), the Old Dean of Guild was elected onto the following committees:

- The committee on the Chamberlain and Tradesmen’s Accounts
- The committee on the public works, applications for the grants of the City’s water, and all affairs relating to the Trinity Hospital
- The committee on the College and High School
- The committee on everything relating to the grounds of Bellevue<sup>15</sup>

It can be seen then, that although the Dean of Guild Court had been, to a certain extent, absorbed by the Town Council, it still served a number of important functions. The Court / Council controlled such matters as new building in the city, the regulation of weights and measures, and disputes between Burgesses. Meanwhile, the Dean of Guild, although elected by the Council rather than by the Guildry / Merchant Company (its later incarnation), still held a good deal of power. As well as heading

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<sup>14</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 154, 29 March 1809-18 Oct. 1809, 18 Oct. 1809, p.455. Trotter was eventually buried here.

his Court / Council, he also controlled the affairs of all the churches in the city, as well as having a voice on the Town Council. The Old Dean of Guild likewise had a voice on the Council, becoming involved in important decision-making committees. Although not independent of the Town Council, the Dean of Guild and his men were still, therefore, important figures in the network of power controlling pre-Reform Edinburgh.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 11 Oct. 1809, pp 430-432. Bellevue was an area in the east of the New Town which remained undeveloped until 1840.

## Trotter on the Town Council

An important aspect of Trotter's career, which can help to shed light on his ability to gain important public commissions, is the various positions that he held on the Town Council. The way in which he manoeuvred himself into positions of power also illuminates the way in which the Council worked at this time.

As early as 1806, Trotter held his first Council position. He had been entered as a Burgess and Guild Brother of Edinburgh in May 1797,<sup>1</sup> allowing him to be elected as a Merchant Councillor in 1806.<sup>2</sup> He had already completed some work for the Council by this point. There is a reference in the Town Council Minute of the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1806 to the Chamberlain being authorised to pay 'To William Trotter for furnishings to the Churches in 1805 £12.7.5'<sup>3</sup> In early 1806, an account by Trotter (with the nature of the work not stated) was remitted to the First Bailie's Committee.<sup>4</sup> This work may have persuaded the Council to elect him.

In his capacity as a Merchant Councillor, Trotter was made Bailie of the Wheat Meal and Corn Markets, with his two fellow Merchant Councillors being made Bailie of the Poultry and Fruit Market and Bailie of the Butter, Cheese and Land Cloth Market.<sup>5</sup> It is not stated exactly what these positions entailed, and they may have been more honorary than functional.

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<sup>1</sup> Boog Watson, C.B. (ed.), *Roll of Edinburgh Burgesses and Guild-Brethren 1701-1841*, Edinburgh, 1929.

<sup>2</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 147, 20 Aug. 1806-7 Jan. 1807, 24 Sept. 1806, p.109.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 10 Sept. 1806, p.75.

<sup>4</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 145, 27 Nov. 1805-26 March 1806, 22 Jan. 1806, p.145.

<sup>5</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 147, 20 Aug. 1806-7 Jan. 1807, 1 Nov. 1806, p.129.

In addition to the Council positions themselves, members of the Council would also sit on a number of committees. These committees were appointed rather than elected, which led to Council interests being promoted in the decisions made. While Trotter was a Merchant Councillor, he sat on the Committee on the College and High School (a joint committee), the Committee on the Shore Dues (relating to the City's large income from use of the Port of Leith), and the Committee on the Wet Docks (being proposed at this time for Leith).<sup>6</sup> It can be seen here that even when holding a relatively minor position on the Council, Trotter was involved with some important decision-making bodies.

In the election of September 1807, Trotter tried for the position of Fourth Bailie on the Council, but was unsuccessful. However, he was soon back within the fold. A Minute of the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 1809 states that:

Considering that there is a vacancy in the Council, of the office of Old Treasurer by the resignation of mr Thomas Henderson; The Magistrates and Council therefore unanimously elected Mr William Trotter lately a Merchant Councillor of this City, a Councillor in the Character of Old Treasurer...<sup>7</sup>

It can be seen here how the 'Old' positions on the Council acted as the 'back door' to the new Council, with a resignation / death etc. leaving a space for somebody new to get a foothold.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 8 Oct. 1806, pp 136-138.

<sup>7</sup> E.C.A., Town Council Minutes, vol.154, 29 March 1809-13 Oct. 1809, 10 May 1809, p.109.

In his position as Old Treasurer, Trotter was appointed as a member of the committee who were to meet with the Governors of Heriot's Hospital and other interested parties regarding the possibility of a communication from Queen Street to Abercromby Place (where, incidentally, he was later to live (see Fig.1).<sup>8</sup> Again, even though Trotter was still a minor figure in the Council at this time, he was still involved in important committees.



Fig.1: Trotter's residence at 13 Abercromby Place, Edinburgh (photo: the author)  
At the 1809 elections, Trotter was able to climb a little further up the Council ladder.

A vacancy in the position of Old Dean of Guild had been created as the previous holder of the position had become Old Provost. Trotter was elected into this vacant

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 5 July 1809, p.225.



position.<sup>9</sup> However, he failed in his second attempt to be made Fourth Bailie, in April 1810.<sup>10</sup>

In his position as Old Dean of Guild, Trotter also sat on various committees, including one on the subject of better accommodating some of the public offices and inferior courts of Edinburgh (in view of the Royal Exchange building being converted to this use), and another on building a new church in the extended Royalty.<sup>11</sup>

After 1810, Trotter appears to have temporarily left the Town Council. He may well have been preoccupied with the affairs of the Merchant Company, as he was made Master of the Company in 1819 (holding this position for one year). However, by 1820, he was obviously turning his attention back to the Town Council. A Minute of the 21<sup>st</sup> of June 1820 records that a meeting had been held the previous day on the subject of the state of St Giles' Cathedral. The meeting was attended by '...the Heads of the different Public Bodies, of the Incorporations and others'.<sup>12</sup> This included Trotter, in his position as Master of the Merchant Company. Other members of the committee included the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and the Principal of the University (the Reverend Baird). Although Trotter could not be said to be pushing himself forwards for such a committee position (as his position as Master of the Merchant Company necessitated his input), he did put himself forward successfully for the sub-committee who were to procure estimates for repairs.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 4 Oct. 1809, p. 419.

<sup>10</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 155, 25 Oct. 1809- 2 May 1810, 13 April 1810, p.435.

<sup>11</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 157, 9 May 1810-12 Sept. 1810, 16 May 1810, p.33.

<sup>12</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 180, 19 Jan. 1820-21 June 1820, 21 June 1820, p.431.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.436.



Trotter continued this trend of involvement in City affairs. He was present at a meeting of the contributors to the Edinburgh Academy at the Waterloo Hotel in July 1822, where Sir Walter Scott was Preses. Other attendees included Henry Cockburn and the Banker, Sir William Forbes.<sup>14</sup> Through giving generously to such an enterprise, Trotter was able to mingle with important society figures and raise his profile in the eyes of the Council.

In March 1824, Trotter attended a meeting at the Lord Provost's house regarding proposed City improvements. At this meeting, he was appointed a member of the sub-committee who were to liaise with the Council on the matter. Those on this sub-committee aside from Trotter included Principal Baird and Sir William Forbes, plus Sir John Marjoribanks (who was Provost from 1813 until 1815) and the Honourable Baron Clerk Rattray (who was a member of the Standing Committee on the College).<sup>15</sup> In total, the sub-committee numbered 29. Through this committee, Trotter not only had access to important social figures, but could also cultivate close contact with the Town Council itself.

In 1825, Trotter seized the opportunity to become Provost. Alexander Henderson, the previous Provost, was suffering from ill health. The Minutes from this period are littered with references to '...the indisposition of the Lord Provost' and '...his Lordship's convalescence.'<sup>16</sup> This meant that he would not stand again for his position, leaving a space to be filled. During the preliminary stages of the annual election, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 1825, Trotter was chosen as a proxy for the absent

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<sup>14</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 184, 20 Feb. 1822-4 Sept. 1822, 17 July 1822, p.299.

<sup>15</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 189, 11 Feb. 1824-30 June 1824, 24 March 1824, pp 114-117.

<sup>16</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 191, 8 Dec. 1824-9 March 1825, 12 Jan. 1825, p.111.

Old Provost of the Council.<sup>17</sup> On the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 1825, Trotter was 'Unanimously elected' Lord Provost.<sup>18</sup>

This 'unanimous' election is particularly interesting. The Minutes state that the leet for Provost consisted of Trotter, Sir William Fettes and John Manderston.<sup>19</sup> However, a book entitled *The Lord Provosts of Edinburgh 1296-1932*, published in the latter year, suggests a different story. The anonymous author states that:

At the election of 1825 there was the most unusual occurrence of a contest for the office of Lord Provost, when William Trotter was opposed by William Allan, subsequently Lord Provost in 1829.<sup>20</sup>

No record to support this assertion can be found. It is true, however, that Allan became Provost in 1829. A fascinating letter in the Melville Papers (held at the National Library of Scotland) discusses this, and shows the corruption inherent within the Council's election process. Robert Saunders Dundas, 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Melville, wrote to the then Lord Provost (Walter Brown) on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 1829. The letter, a note at the top saying 'private', states that Viscount Melville had received letters from Henry Cockburn and 'Mr Dundas of Arniston' (William Dundas, the Viscount's cousin). Melville states that it appears to be out of the question for Cockburn '...to undertake

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<sup>17</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 193, 3 Aug. 1825-9 Nov. 1825, 16 Sept. 1825, pp 194-195.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 4 Oct. 1825, p.219.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 30 Sept. 1825, p.214.

<sup>20</sup> Anon., *The Lord Provosts of Edinburgh 1296-1932*, Edinburgh, 1932, p.108.

the duties of your present office' (i.e. the Provost-ship).<sup>21</sup> It therefore appears to the Viscount that it would be most advisable to select Mr Adam:

...& I hope you will find that he will be acceptable to the Council. The name of Mr Trotter has also been mentioned, to which of course I have no right to object, if the Town Council see fit to select him. – But though I have no right to object to their selecting him, I have an undoubted right to regulate my own conduct in such was as way (sic.) appear to me to be proper under such a contingency, & I should not be dealing fairly or candidly with you (who are first entitled to the utmost fairnefs and friendly dealing on my part) if I did not state distinctly that I can have no intercourse, public or private, with Mr Trotter; I am persuaded moreover that I should have no difficulty in satisfying you of the propriety & necessity of such a course of proceeding as far as I am concerned.' <sup>22</sup>

From this quote, it can be seen that Viscount Melville has a strong dislike of Trotter. The book *The Lord Provosts of Edinburgh 1296-1932* may again be useful here. The author states that in 1826, a deputation of the Trades invited Trotter to stand for Parliament in opposition to William Dundas, then Member.<sup>23</sup> Trotter was unsuccessful, Dundas being returned for the seventh time, but it may be that William Dundas wrote to his cousin, Viscount Melville, to state his opinion of Trotter, leading to the Viscount's strong words of disapproval to the then Provost. The letter illustrates clearly the fact that the election process was far from democratic. Those in power

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<sup>21</sup> N.L.S., MS1054, Melville Papers 1808-1838, f. 195-196, Melville to Lord Provost (Walter Brown), 5 June 1829.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Op Cit, p.108.

could control those gaining power according to their own personal preferences. And so, William Allan, who had supposedly stood against Trotter in 1825, found himself made Provost in 1829. Trotter, who was obviously hoping to get back within the ranks of the Council, found himself pushed out.

Returning now to 1825, Trotter's new position as Lord Provost led to his involvement in a number of the most important Council committees. A Minute of the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 1825 discusses the appointment of the:

Committee on the College, High School, and whatever else shall be remitted to them vizt. The Right Honble the Lord Provost, as Rector of the College *ex officio*, Preses.<sup>24</sup>

This reference to the Provost as 'Rector' of the College relates to an ongoing dispute between the Town Council, as Patrons of the College, and The Senatus Academicus. The dispute had started in the year before Trotter's election, and began as a specific disagreement over the Patrons' election of a Dr James Hamilton as Professor of Midwifery, a new position in the College. The dispute led to a wider struggle over the relative rights of the two bodies with regard to the running of the College. Strongly worded letters were sent back and forth outlining the rights of either body. One particularly forthright letter was sent to the Council by Andrew Duncan Senior, in his position as President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. In it, he states that:

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<sup>24</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 193, 3 Aug. 1825-9 Nov. 1825, 12 Oct. 1825, p.266.

...the Patrons of the University have no more title to control the powers of the Senatus Academicus in enacting laws for the graduation of Doctors, than they have to control the power of the King in the creation of Dukes...<sup>25</sup>

The dispute rumbled on, and the cause was taken up by Trotter when he became Provost. An insight into his character is given by his actions with regard to this matter. He began signing any letters to the Senatus, and signing the Council Minutes, as 'Rector' of the College, a title apparently without precedent. The 'opinion' of the Solicitor General (who was 'reimbursed' for his troubles) was sought on the subject of the dispute, and he declared that a 'Visitation' by the Council in the College was the correct course of action.<sup>26</sup>

The Visitation was carried out on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 1825. The Senatus, in retaliation, decided to apply to the King for a commission to visit the College and settle a clear constitution for the governing of it. This Royal Visitation was duly arranged, but instead of focusing solely on the College of Edinburgh, it was made to encompass every College / University in Scotland. In some ways, this benefited Edinburgh, as it allowed an opportunity for the Senatus and Patrons to push for the completion of the College buildings, which were vastly under-funded by this point. However, many other Scottish institutions were unhappy about the intrusion of a commission, and were therefore not well disposed towards Edinburgh.

Trotter was also involved in a number of other committees of the Council. He still sat on the Improvements Committee that he had joined before his election as Provost. He

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<sup>25</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 191, 8 Dec. 1824-9 Mar. 1825, 22 Dec. 1824, p.53.

is described in the list of members as 'William Trotter Esquire of Ballindean' (his Perthshire country seat), rather than as 'Lord Provost', perhaps due to his having joined before this title was bestowed on him. He was a Director and Treasurer of a local day school institution in the Parish of St George's, and presided over a meeting at the Assembly Rooms in June 1826 for the establishment of a public subscription to relieve the suffering of the manufacturing classes.<sup>27</sup>

It is interesting to note a Minute of the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 1826. Trotter was to be Convener of a committee regarding a new church (St Stephen's) planned for St Vincent's Street (to be built by Playfair).<sup>28</sup> At a later meeting (on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1826), Trotter led the motion to establish a committee for the taking of estimates for the building of the church. The Lord Provost was also appointed to this committee.<sup>29</sup> Fig.2 shows the church today, a plaque above the entrance reading:

ERECTED  
MDCCCXXVII  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
WILLIAM TROTTER OF BALLINDEAN  
LORD PROVOST OF THE CITY  
WILLIAM HENRY PLAYFAIR  
ARCHITECT

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<sup>26</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 193, 3 Aug. 1825-9 Nov. 1825, 26 Oct. 1825, p.313.

<sup>27</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 197, 15 March 1826-19 July 1826, 7 June 1826, pp 320-321.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 15 March 1826, p.3.



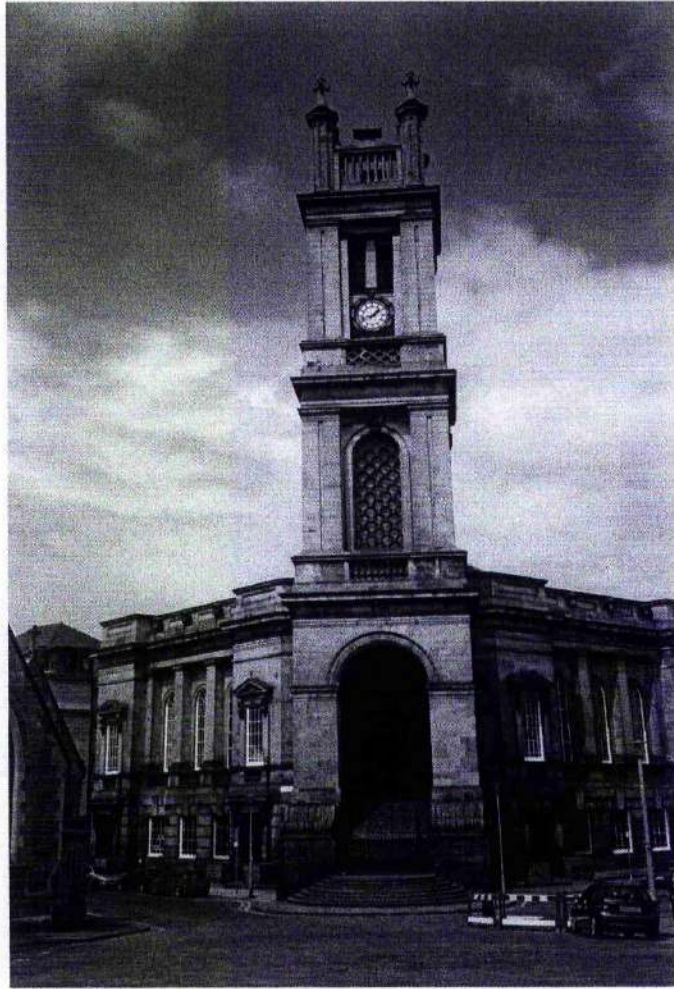


Fig.2: St Stephen's Church, St Vincent's Street, Edinburgh, built in 1827 (photo: the author).

A Minute of the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 1826 indicates the wealth of Trotter at this stage in his career. He, along with the Convener of the Trades and the Master of the Merchant Company, proposed to lend the City £3500 to help reduce the balance due to the bankers at this time.<sup>30</sup> This indicates that he must have been exceedingly wealthy at this stage. The lending of money to the City was a popular thing to do. Those doing so seem either to be society ladies or tradesmen / merchants. For the latter category, this may have been a way of ingratiating oneself to the Council, with a future Council

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<sup>29</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 198, 26 July 1826-29 Nov. 1826, 13 Sept. 1826, p.194.



position in mind. For others, this was not simply a charitable move. Trotter, it is stated in the same minute as above, was to receive 4 ½ % interest on his money, making it a sound investment.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1827:

...the thanks of the Council were unanimously tendered to the Lord Provost for his conduct in the chair, in particular for the courtesy with which he had at all times conducted himself towards every individual Member of the Council...<sup>31</sup>

From the tone of this Minute, it is clear that Trotter was not going to run for Provost in the coming year. His time as the head of the Town Council was over. Although perhaps not the best remembered of Edinburgh Provosts, he had left his mark. His defiant stance over the dispute with the Senatus had led to the introduction of the Royal Visitation to all the Scottish Universities. He had also been in power at a time when the City was still growing. As well as being a key figure in the arrangements for the building of St Stephen's Church, Trotter also laid the foundation stone of George IV Bridge in 1827.<sup>32</sup> His position as Provost, together with his work in some of the City's finest public buildings made Trotter a key figure of the Edinburgh of the first half of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 25 Oct. 1826, pp 357-358.

<sup>31</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 202, 29 Aug. 1827-13 Feb.1828, 12 Sept. 1827, p.76.

<sup>32</sup> Anon., Op Cit, p.109.

#### **Chapter 4: The College of Edinburgh from Foundation to Playfair**

The College of Edinburgh (the term ‘College’ being used interchangeably with ‘University’) was founded in 1583. It was unique among its fellow Scottish institutions in being a Civic institution from the start, founded and governed by the town itself.<sup>1</sup> The Town Council were the Patrons of the College, responsible for its finances and buildings, as well as the regulation of academic affairs. The academic ruling body of the College was the Senatus Academicus, made up of the Professors. The relative rights and responsibilities of these two bodies were not always easily distinguishable, which occasionally led to protracted conflict. A major conflict between the Patrons and the Senatus came to a head during Trotter’s term of office as Provost (from 1825 to 1827). This is discussed in more detail in the previous chapter.

The College by the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century consisted of a series of buildings which had been erected mainly in the 16<sup>th</sup>, with many alterations and extensions as the College grew in size and the focus of the courses offered changed. This piecemeal arrangement began to jar with the splendid and ordered arrangement of the New Town that was beginning to take shape. As early as 1768, the then Principal of the College, William Robertson, was pushing for something to be done about the College. In his *Memorial Relating to the University of Edinburgh*, he put forward a proposal to rebuild the College on its current site. An appeal for subscriptions was launched, but was unsuccessful.<sup>2</sup> Interest in a new College was rekindled by the South Bridge Act of 1785. The North Bridge had been finished in 1772, providing a link between the Old and New Town, otherwise separated by the North Loch. Attention was then

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<sup>1</sup> Fraser, Andrew G., *The Building of Old College: Adam, Playfair and the University of Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1989, p.14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.20.

turned to making a link between this access and the outlying Southern Districts of the City, which were flourishing due to the schemes of speculative developers and the status of the districts as exempt from tax (due to the fact that they were technically outside the 'Royalty' of the city). The South Bridge Act stated that profits made from the building of the bridge (through selling the areas alongside it for development) were to be earmarked for the erection of new College buildings.<sup>3</sup> The Commissioners appointed to oversee the building of the bridge were therefore also to oversee the new College project. However, subsequent Acts separated the two enterprises, and Trustees were appointed to specifically oversee the new College development.

Robert Adam was chosen as the architect of the new College, arguably through a mixture of his talent and connections (he was, for example, related to Principal Robertson). Work began in 1789, funded by a mixture of public subscriptions and assistance from the Government, which was secured through the influence of the Right Honourable Henry Dundas, then Treasurer of the Navy.<sup>4</sup> By the time of Adam's death in 1792, the grand entrance block, facing east to meet the new South Bridge, was well under way, as was the north west corner block, containing the Anatomy theatre and associated rooms. After Adam's death, work ground to a halt. This was partly due to the architect's death, but there was a complex of other contributing factors. Adam's brothers, James and William (John had died not long after his brother), carried on work at the College, but did little more than continue with the two blocks started by their brother. Financial pressures had overwhelmed the project. After an initial burst of enthusiasm, subscriptions soon dried up, and the Government was unable to contribute as the lengthy French war, unforeseen in 1789, was

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<sup>3</sup> Youngson, A.J., *The Making of Classical Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1966, p.111.

consuming the bulk of its resources.<sup>5</sup> By early 1794, operations had ceased.<sup>6</sup> In 1801, Dundas managed to persuade Government to part with £5,000, in order to put the areas of the College already built in a state of repair secure enough to prevent their decay. However, Dundas fell from power in 1805, and despite his subsequent acquittal from the charges made against him, he played a far less active role in politics.<sup>7</sup> All hopes of securing further funding were lost. It was realised that £90,000 would be necessary in order to complete the College to Adam's original plan, an impossibly large amount in the contemporary political, and therefore financial, climate.<sup>8</sup>

It is rather ironic that on the one hand, the French wars effectively put a stop to the Adam College, and yet, in another way, they produced a situation that could be used by the Town Council as a bargaining tool for the renewal of Government funding at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The French wars severely curtailed the trend of young British gentlemen travelling to the Continent to study. Scotland therefore became a destination for the alternative Grand Tour, with Edinburgh attracting a significant proportion of the visitors.<sup>9</sup> In 1789, there were 1,000 students at the College of Edinburgh. By 1815, this had risen to over 2,000.<sup>10</sup> This influx of students gave the Town Council more weight with which to push for the completion of the College project, albeit on a more limited scale than was originally intended.

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<sup>4</sup> Fraser, *Op Cit*, p.95.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.121.

<sup>6</sup> Horn, D.B., *A Short History of the University of Edinburgh, 1556-1889*, Edinburgh, 1967, p.89.

<sup>7</sup> Fraser, *Op Cit*, p.120.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.122.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.127.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

Robert Reid, who was later to become the King's Architect and Surveyor in Scotland, and who had already been active in the development of the New Town (for example, designing the Bank of Scotland at the head of the Mound (with Richard Crichton), and the second New Town to the north of Queen Street (with William Sibbald), was commissioned in 1809 to produce designs for finishing the College on a reduced scale.<sup>11</sup> On the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 1809, the Convention of Royal Burghs passed an Act authorising an application to be made to the King's Privy Council and to Parliament for '...such aid as they might think proper to give' for completing the College buildings.<sup>12</sup>

No concrete steps were taken until Sir John Marjoribanks became Provost in October 1813. Marjoribanks had requested plans for the College from local architects in 1814, but nothing was moved forward until the Government grant was obtained in 1815, on the basis of Reid's reduced plans.<sup>13</sup> The initial sum to be granted was £10,000, with the implication that this sum would be donated for the next seven years. This generous grant meant that the Government took arrangements out of the Provost's hands. In September 1816, a new College Trust was set up (soon referred to as the College Commission).<sup>14</sup> The Commissioners were to oversee the judging of plans, which would be received by way of a competition, as well as overseeing the project once it had got off the ground. The plans were to be guided by a report from the Senatus entitled *Report from the Senatus Academicus of the University of Edinburgh on the Accommodation required in the New Buildings*. Plans were received from William Burn, Thomas Hamilton, James Milne, Robert Morison, John Paterson and

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.129.

<sup>12</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 155, 25 Oct. 1809 –2 May 1810, 20 Dec. 1809, pp 170-171.

<sup>13</sup> Fraser, Op Cit, p.135.

W. H. Playfair. Richard Crichton submitted his plans late, and there were also two sets of commissioned plans, from William Adam and Archibald Elliott. Robert Reid refused to compete formally, but his plans were still inspected.<sup>15</sup> On the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 1816, a meeting of the College Commissioners unanimously agreed to accept the proposals of W.H. Playfair. Playfair was selected due to the fact that he had managed to incorporate all the professors' needs, as outlined in the Senatus' report, in a building which respected Adam's work and yet was economical. It was the perfect combination for winning the approval of the Senatus, the Commissioners and the Government.

The identities and status of the Commissioners is worth noting, as they indicate the importance of the project. There were 17 meetings held between November 1817 and January 1823. 13 of these were General Meetings of the College Commissioners.

Those in attendance (though not all at every meeting) were:

- The Lord Provost (William Arbuthnot, then Kincaid McKenzie)
- The Lord President (Charles Hope)
- The Lord Justice Clerk (David Boyle)
- The Lord Chief Baron (Robert Dundas)
- The Lord Chief Commissioner of the Jury Court (William Adam of Blairadam, the nephew of John Adam)
- The Lord Advocate (Alexander Maconochie)
- Sir John Marjoribanks (former Lord Provost)
- Principal Baird

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.138.

- Dr Andrew Duncan (Secretary of the Senatus)
- The 1<sup>st</sup> Bailie of the Town Council (held by a number of people during this sample period – Bailies Henderson, White, Kyrie and Smith)
- Henry Mackenzie Esq.
- The Right Hon. William Dundas (M.P. for the City)
- Hugh Warrender Esq. (The Crown Agent who administered the £5,000 grant in 1801)
- Baron Clerk Rattray (One of the Barons of the Exchequer)
- Robert Johnston(e) Esq. (a former Dean of Guild on the Town Council)
- W.H. Playfair
- Adam Duff (An advocate who gave legal advice to the Commissioners)<sup>16</sup>

Four out of the 17 meetings were Committee Meetings of the Standing Committee. After the first, these were all attended by Baron Clerk Rattray, Robert Johnstone and Andrew Duncan. The Standing Committee oversaw the day-to-day running of the project, working closely with the architect. They received requests from Professors regarding their accommodation within the College, prepared reports for Government (detailed below), and dealt with problems that arose as the project progressed. For example, a Standing Committee Minute of the 30<sup>th</sup> of July 1823 states that a letter had been received by Rattray from Professor Jameson. The cupolas in the Museum had been found to be faulty, affecting cases, mineral and model tables, and carpets.

Jameson explained that:

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.145.

<sup>16</sup> E.C.A., 2/1-2/97 (1815-1818) and 2/98-2/165 (1818-1824) College Commissioners' Minutes. Explanations of positions held from Fraser, *Op Cit*, p.187.



It would seem that the water gains admittance by the holes in the ventilators, which are evidently of an injudicious form, being spherical, the lower half perforated, and without any projection to throw off the rain.<sup>17</sup>

Mr Playfair is instructed in the minutes to attend to the problem immediately. After the first run of meetings between November 1815 and January 1823, when a large proportion of the meetings were General Meetings, most of the running of the project seems to have been handed over to the Standing Committee.

Between 1815 and 1822, £10,000 per year was given to the project by the Government. When it was found that a great deal more money would be necessary to complete the project, the Commissioners were forced to make annual applications for the continuance of the grant (this was done between 1823 and 1826). In these years, the Provost, before the meeting of each session of Parliament, would calculate the amount that it would be necessary to apply for. A requisition would be transmitted to the Standing Committee, who would prepare a letter, accompanied by reports from the architect (which would have been approved by a General Meeting). This letter would be addressed to the Provost, but was intended to be read by the Treasury.

The Commissioners' request for £6,000 to complete the project, made in 1827, was unsuccessful. The Government claimed that it did not want to grant any more money before reading the report of the Royal Commission that was visiting the Universities of Scotland (a Commission that was established due to Trotter's disputes with the Senatus, discussed in Chapter 3, Section 4). The Commission did not report until

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<sup>17</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No. 2, 1816-1828, 30 July 1823, p.360.

1831, leaving a period of six years of financial constraints, as the final sum was not forthcoming until 1832. Yet again, the College project was being racked by financial difficulties. The actual sum necessary to complete the buildings was nearer £16,000 than £6,000, according to Playfair, but Government was too preoccupied with the looming Reform Acts to assist the College to the necessary extent, even after the Royal Commissioners' report had been received.<sup>18</sup> The Town Council finally went bankrupt in 1833, and was therefore not in a position to pump money into the project.<sup>19</sup>

There were other factors, from within the project itself, that had led to a repeat of the financial troubles suffered during the Adam phase of the College. Student numbers were continuing to grow. Even by 1823, there were 2,400 students.<sup>20</sup> With this influx came greater demands from the Professors to provide the necessary accommodation and equipment for their classes. The Commissioners were only supposed to be responsible for the initial building of the College, with subsequent alterations, additions, equipment, etc. to be paid for by the Town Council. However, the protracted nature of the project meant that it was difficult to establish a cut-off point when the College could be said to have been completed, and responsibility handed over to the Town Council. The majority of the Professors' demands therefore seem to have been met by the Commissioners.

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<sup>18</sup> Fraser, *Op Cit*, p.267. (The Reform Acts were concerned with the methods of election of both local and national Government. They drastically altered the way in which the Town Council of Edinburgh was elected, shattering the Oligarchy which had existed undisturbed since 1583. This subject is discussed in the previous chapter.)

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Youngson, *Op Cit*, p.126.

The expansion of the College Museum was another major issue. The growing fame of the collection and its elegant accommodation drew other donations and bequests, which the Commissioners were then obliged to house. This is discussed in detail in the following chapter, but it should be noted here as a source of over-expenditure that was not foreseen at the commencement of the project.

The other major source of the financial difficulty was the purchase of grounds around the College. The houses and other buildings to the west of the College, behind the Museum, necessitated a great financial outlay. The purchase was necessary due to worries that the land might be built on by developers. If five-storey houses had been built, the Museum would have suffered not only from a lack of natural light, but also from the threat of fire spreading from these houses to the Museum and its priceless collections. There was also the danger of smoke damage from the chimneys of these potential houses.

Another problem arose with the choice of A.O. Turnbull as the contractor for the College Library. Turnbull did not have the capital to outlay on the necessary workmen and materials for such a large project, made worse by rising inflation. Work was therefore often delayed. In the end, other workmen had to be called in to finish the library (though little detail survives of who they were or what was done), but bad financial management meant that the money already paid to Turnbull for work which was left uncompleted was found to be unrecoverable. Such delays had knock-on financial effects, as salaries had to be paid to people such as the Clerk of Works until the project was completed.

There was no official handing over of the College to the Town Council as Patrons, but as the last of the money available to the Commissioners was spent, they ceased to have a formal purpose. When the Town Council began to stabilise after its bankruptcy, it completed the work of the Commissioners, albeit only addressing the essential problems. The College gates designed by Playfair were finally erected in 1840, motivated more, it seems, by the Snowball Riot of 1838, in which Town-Gown animosity had come to a dangerous head, with local residents storming the College courtyard, than by a desire to see the project through.<sup>21</sup>

Despite such dire financial difficulties, the College had, by 1840, been completed in a way that satisfied, to a great extent, Playfair's proposals. 55 years after the South Bridge Act made the first tentative steps towards the building of a new College, Edinburgh had a place of learning appropriate to the City that was becoming, largely through the work of Playfair, a 'Modern Athens'.

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<sup>21</sup> Fraser, *Op Cit*, p.267.

## **Chapter 5: The College Museum of Natural History**

### **The Sources**

There are a number of extant sources of information concerning the Museum of Natural History in the College of Edinburgh which can throw light upon the nature and extent of Trotter's work here. They also provide an insight into the history of the collections of the Museum, the reasons for its growth, and contemporary opinion of the Museum building as finished.

Many of the relevant papers are held by Edinburgh City Archives, due to the position of the Town Council of Edinburgh as Patrons of the University. The Papers of the College Commissioners include information about the Museum as established before the Commission's great works. There are a selection of estimates, contracts and accounts which show the extent of Trotter's work at the Museum, and indeed in the College in general. These are incomplete, however, and stored in bundles without a detailed index, making them a complicated tool to use. Three bundles of College Commissioners' Minutes provide an insight into the workings of the Commission, including disputes and difficulties, reports by the architect and by the professors. Two College Trust Minute Books provide this information in a more complete and chronological form. The Town Council Minutes of the period help to flesh out this information, although references to the College in such Minutes are infrequent, as the College Committee of the Town Council, and indeed the College Commissioners themselves, worked independently of the Town Council on the day-to-day business of building the new College.

Another layer of information is provided by the plans, sections, and details for the Museum produced by its architect, W.H. Playfair. These are held, along with many drawings pertaining to the rest of the College and Playfair's other commissions, by the Special Collections Division of the University of Edinburgh Library.

A number of contemporary books on the history of the College, and on Edinburgh in general, add to the occasionally dry, business-like sources of Council Minutes etc. by providing details of the collections of the Museum, their organisation within the Museum building, and the splendour of the interiors. The two most useful are: William Stark's *Picture of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1825) and A. Bower's *The History of the University of Edinburgh, Volume III* (Edinburgh, 1830).

Together, these sources provide a coherent and colourful picture of Trotter's work at the Museum and its wider context.

## **Introduction**

The Museum of Natural History was designed to be, along with the College Library, the centrepiece of the whole College complex. Professor Jameson, the Professor of Natural History at the College and therefore Keeper of the department's collection, expressed his hopes for the Museum in a letter to the Standing Committee of the College Commissioners of the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, 1824:

Even in our time, I hope the Museum of the University of Edinburgh will equal in utility, extent and splendour the most celebrated of those on the Continent, so long the admiration of the World.<sup>1</sup>

Admittedly, Professor Jameson was using this letter to urge the necessity of fitting up the Under Museum and Galleries in order to accommodate the rapidly expanding collections. However, this statement can be seen as more than mere rhetoric, as it echoes the opinions of less partial contemporary observers. Bower, in his *The History of the University of Edinburgh, Volume III*, says of the completed new Museum that ‘The accomodation (sic.) and elegance of the suite of rooms in the interior are no where exceeded’<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that Jameson, in the above letter, refers to the Natural History Museum as ‘The Museum of the University of Edinburgh’. Although there were other museum collections in the College, the Natural History Museum had, through the size and importance of its collections and the splendour of its apartments, eclipsed them to become the ‘University’s Museum’.

### **The History of the Collections**

According to Stark, the Museum’s collection was founded by Sir Andrew Balfour, and consisted of his own collection of medals, pictures, busts, arms, clothing and ornament of foreign countries, mathematical, philosophical,<sup>3</sup> and surgical instruments, as well as:

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<sup>1</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No. 2., 1816-1828, pp 400-401.

<sup>2</sup> Bower, A., *The History of the University of Edinburgh, Volume III*, Edinburgh, 1830, p.364.

<sup>3</sup> At this time, Physics was referred to as Natural Philosophy.



...a cabinet with all the simples of the *Materia Medica*, fossils, plants and animals from countries in which he travelled and from the most distant parts of the world.<sup>4</sup>

After Balfour's death in 1694, the collection was placed in the hall of the College as was, which was later used as a library. Stark remarks that:

At this time the Edinburgh Museum was regarded as one of the most considerable in Europe. But, from want of men of similar tastes or talents (to Balfour), this valuable collection remained for upwards of fifty years useless and neglected.<sup>5</sup>

The next great benefactor of the Museum was Dr Thomson of Palermo, a copy of whose will is engrossed in the Town Council Minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> January 1809 (The will being originally made on June 1<sup>st</sup> 1800). Dr Thomson donated money towards the maintenance of a lecturer on mineralogy, along with his extensive collections of fossils, minerals, gems, *Materia Medica*, drawings and books.<sup>6</sup>

When Professor Jameson succeeded to the Chair of Natural Philosophy, the collections were housed partly in a lecture room and partly in 'an older outer and miserable apartment'.<sup>7</sup> Jameson placed his own private collection in the College, and this gesture, together with Dr Thomson's bequest, spurred the Professor on to remodel the rooms available in order to better accommodate the collections.

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<sup>4</sup> Stark, W., *Picture of Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1825, p 182.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 153, pp 91-92.

<sup>7</sup> Stark, Op Cit, p.183.

## The Museum – The ‘First’ Museum

Among the papers of the College Commissioners, there is a report by William Tennant, the College Bailie (a Town Council position), dated the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 1808. The report states that:

...considerable progress has been made in fitting up the room, which was formerly the humanity class, for the reception of this collection (of Dr Thomson), according to a specification and estimate by Mr Trotter, which he (Bailie Tennant) had preferred as being cheaper than an offer by F. Braidwood.<sup>8</sup>

The original specifications, dated the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1808, are very detailed, but can be summarised as follows:

- A case of drawers 15 feet long, with 56 drawers.
- A glass case to stand on top of the above, with pilasters in front and an ornamented frieze and cornice (in the style of the large glass case already in use).
- Two cases of drawers ten feet long, each with 42 drawers, enclosed with three pairs of panelled doors.

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<sup>8</sup> E.C.A., 6/1-6/25, Papers of the College Commissioners, Papers Re. Dr. Thomson's Museum, 6 Sept. 1808. Francis Braidwood Snr was made a Burgess and Guild Brother in 1776. A wright, upholsterer and undertaker, he held premises at No. 4 West Side, South Bridge, from 1788 to 1805. Francis Braidwood Jnr became a Burgess and Guild Brother in 1797 (the same year as Trotter). He held premises in Adam Square. The two premises (on the fashionable and elegant South Bridge and Adam Square) indicate the success of the family business. It seems likely, due to the date of the report above, that it is Braidwood Jnr who is being referred to. (Information on Braidwood Jnr and Snr from Bamford, F., *A Dictionary of Edinburgh Wrights and Furniture Makers 1660-1840*, Furniture History, 1983, p.45).

- A glass case, to stand upon one of the above cases (to match ones already in use).
- A case of drawers containing 28 drawers and two pairs of panelled doors.
- A glass case to stand on the above.
- Four presses with 32 drawers, enclosed with two panelled doors.<sup>9</sup>

Trotter returned the specifications on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 1808, with an estimate of £194 Sterling.<sup>10</sup> These specifications and estimate illustrate that even at this relatively early stage of Trotter's career, the family business must have been thriving. In order to have the capital to lay out on materials and workmen for such a large job, the firm would have had to have been financially secure. The precise specifications suggest that the furniture would have been built 'from scratch', rather than utilising stock pieces from the firm's warehouse, making this a rather time-consuming commission. The furniture is also far removed from that destined for a domestic setting. Ornament is little mentioned, and the scale of the pieces is vast (note the first item, a case of drawers 15 feet long, with 56 drawers). Such furniture is explicitly suited to the museum requirements of storage and display, featuring enclosed cases with glass cases on top (this kind of arrangement appearing again in Trotter's work for the 'new' Museum). Only a well-respected and experienced firm would have been chosen to, and indeed been able to, take on such a commission.

It is also interesting to note that cases already in use for housing the collections are to be retained, and new pieces made to co-ordinate with them. This shows firstly that economy was a consideration. A Town Council Minute of the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1809

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 23 May 1808.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 27 June 1808.

refers to the Museum furniture made in 1808, and states that the sums paid for it should be ‘...placed to account of the Museum bequeathed by Dr Thomson’.<sup>11</sup> This must refer to the money assigned by Thomson in his will for the preservation and increase of the collection. Perhaps Jameson and / or the Town Council had decided to be thrifty with regard to this sum of money in case of future need. Secondly, this suggests that the Museum furniture was designed with utility rather than fashion in mind. Old cases could be copied, rather than new ones designed which reflected current styles. It should be noted, however, that the date of manufacture of the previous cases is not mentioned, and they could conceivably have been approximately contemporary with the newly ordered ones (although references to support this have not been found).

The Papers of the College Commissioners for the 23<sup>rd</sup> Of June 1808 note that Trotter had written to Tennant, the College Bailie, stating that:

In conformity to your directions I have made an accurate survey of the Museum in the College and consulted with professor Jameson as to the most proper mode of making the additions and alterations necessary for the accommodation of the new Collection.<sup>12</sup>

This suggests that Trotter’s specifications were not acceptable in their original form.

A summary of these additions and alterations appears below, the total cost being £320 Sterling:

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<sup>11</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 154, p.357.

<sup>12</sup> E.C.A., 6/1-6/25, Papers of the College Commissioners, Papers Re. Dr Thomson’s Museum, 23 June 1808.

- The cases to be made of hardwood.
- The front of each door to have a square brass frame for a sliding schedule or ticket.
- Two brass knobs for each drawer, instead of a brass handle, to be provided.
- Another case of drawers to be supplied for the under part of the present large ornamented glass case.
- The glass case to be made high with additional panes on top of the doors, and then doors of it and the glass case already in the Museum to be made to open with hinges and locks.
- A glass case to be made for each of the four separate presses.
- The partition between the two rooms to be taken down.<sup>13</sup>

Trotter's personal service should be noted here. In the above letter, he states that he has surveyed the Museum and spoken in person to Professor Jameson about his requirements. In contrast, Mr Braidwood, who was also putting in an estimate for the work, refers in his letter to Tennant only to the '...letter you have handed me of the 25<sup>th</sup> ...'<sup>14</sup>, implying that his calculations were made without a visit to the Museum or its Keeper.

There are three references in the Town Council Minutes to sums paid for the work by Trotter detailed above. A minute of the 16<sup>th</sup> of August 1809 reads:

Bailie Hill Represented that Mr William Trotter had executed work in the College to a considerable amount, particularly in fitting up presses, and other

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

furnishings for the accommodation of Dr Thomson's Museum; and therefore moving that the Chamberlain be authorised to make payment to him the sum of £400. . – to account – which motion was agreed to, and the Chamberlain was accordingly authorised to make payment to Mr Trotter of the foresaid sum.<sup>15</sup>

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1809, the Chamberlain was authorised to pay 'To William Trotter for fitting up a museum for the reception of Dr Thomson's Collection' and for work in other parts of the University (discussed in chapter 7), in 1808, the sum of £777.2.8.<sup>16</sup> Another sum is also mentioned in a minute of the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1810, the Chamberlain being authorised to pay '...to Mr William Trotter for furnishings to the Museum in 1809 £110.1.4.'<sup>17</sup> No specifications for this work could be found.

From the specifications and accounts discussed above, it can be seen that Trotter worked extensively in the 'first' Museum, and was well paid for his efforts. The scale of this work, however, pales in comparison to his work in the Museum of the 'new' College, where he helped to create the splendid interiors that fulfilled Professor Jameson's hopes of rivalling the great Continental museums.

### **The 'New' Museum in Playfair's College**

A College Commissioners' Minute of the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 1817 includes a report by W.H. Playfair, stating that he had prepared an accurate set of working drawings for

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<sup>15</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 154, p.297.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.357.

<sup>17</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 156, p.408.



the inside finishings of the Museum.<sup>18</sup> These working drawings are held by the Special Collections Division of the University of Edinburgh Library. Fig.1 shows a working drawing for the wall cabinets of the Museum. The precise measurements and intricate detail are clearly visible, illustrating the fact that Playfair was not only the architect of the exteriors and internal spatial arrangements of the College buildings, but in fact controlled the design of the whole project, from the external spacing of windows to the design of a door-knob for the interior (see Fig.2, which shows a detailed design for the door-knob of the Museum entrance). It is interesting to find an architect paying such close attention to the minutiae of a building's design, and this attention to detail can be seen in the portfolios held by the University of Edinburgh relating to Playfair's other commissions.

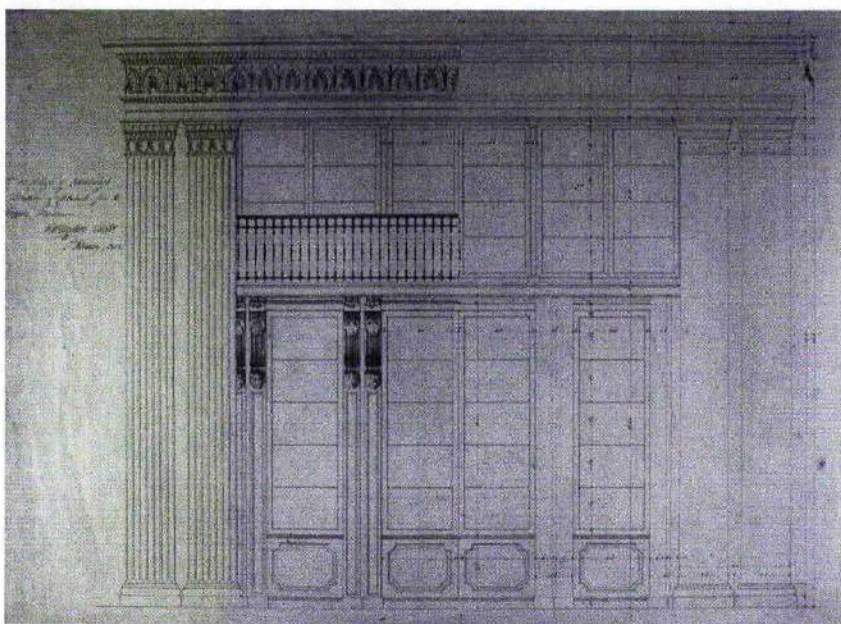


Fig.1: Working drawing of the wall cabinets of the Natural History Museum of the College of Edinburgh by W.H. Playfair, 1817 (Edinburgh University Library (Special Collections), Catalogue of Architectural Drawings by W.H. Playfair, running no. 34).

<sup>18</sup> E.C.A., 2/1-2/97, College Commissioners' Minutes 1815-1818, 25 Sept. 1817.



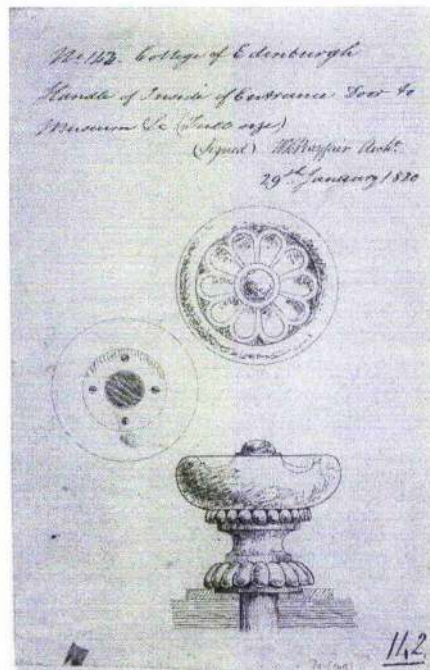


Fig.2: Design for a door-knob for the interior of the Natural History Museum of the College of Edinburgh by W.H. Playfair, 1817 (Edinburgh University Library (Special Collections), Catalogue of Architectural Drawings by W.H. Playfair, running no. 145).

These drawings are also pertinent in relation to Trotter. Their specificity implies that Trotter was not the designer of the wall cabinets and other ‘fitted’ parts of the interior, instead being merely the executer of another’s designs (although a very able executer at that). However, the extant Playfair drawings are limited to such ‘fitted’ parts of the interior (which is not the case with other commissions in the Playfair Portfolios). This could have a number of explanations. It may simply be that the drawings do not survive. It could be that the ‘movable’ pieces provided by Trotter were taken from stock. In some cases, with furniture which, from its description in the accounts, sounds like domestic furniture, this may be true. However, this seems unlikely to be the case with regard to the more specifically museum-suited pieces (both will be discussed thoroughly below). Another explanation could be that Trotter was allowed

to design the 'movable' furniture. The detailed nature of Playfair's other specifications would seem to cast doubt on this. An architect with such a strong hold on the total design of a building seems unlikely to have left a cabinet-maker to his own devices when designing a large quantity of movable furniture for such an important interior.

Another possible explanation is perhaps the most intriguing. It may be that Trotter retained the designs of Playfair for his own personal use. This was a situation not without precedent in the history of their collaborations. Playfair's Letter Book Number Four, also held by the Special Collections Division of the University of Edinburgh Library, includes a letter from Playfair to Trotter (sent to Mr Blackadder, manager of Trotter's affairs at this time):

Sir, I wrote to you last night to say that your offer for the Tables for the College of Surgeons was not accepted and requesting you to return My Drawing. I have sent again this Morning for this Drawing and I have received in reply a verbal mefsage from Mr Paxton. That he cannot return it and wishes to see Mr Macpherson \_ This is surely very singular \_ I beg again to write for my Drawing...<sup>19</sup>

Trotter's reasons for retaining such drawings may be explained by the fact that a set of dining chairs at the House of Dun, produced by him, bear a striking resemblance to Playfair's chair designs for the College of Surgeons.<sup>20</sup> However, this tantalising

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<sup>19</sup> E.U.L., MS 3084, Playfair Collection, Letters No. 4, 27 April 1832, p.255.

<sup>20</sup> Gow, Ian, 'New Light on Late Trotter', *Country Life*, 11 Aug. 1988, p.100.

theory regarding the absence of certain drawings from Playfair's portfolio must remain mere speculation without further evidence to confirm it.

The collaboration between Playfair and Trotter is particularly interesting due to the important role that the former played in the architectural development of Edinburgh. Playfair is widely considered as the man responsible for the reincarnation of the city as a 'Modern Athens'. Henry Cockburn remarked that Playfair had:

...rendered the city of Edinburgh more indebted to him than to the tastes of all other modern architects it has produced / employed.<sup>21</sup>

As well as the University and the College of Surgeons, he was responsible for many other landmark buildings in the city, including the National Gallery and the unfinished National Monument on Calton Hill. Playfair's working practices, including the way in which he collaborated with the city's finest craftsmen, are therefore of interest not just to furniture historians, but also to architectural historians and those with a broader interest in the changing face of the city in the late eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries.

A Minute of the College Commissioners of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 1818 gives Playfair the authority to carry into execution various jobs over the course of the Summer, including the furnishing of the cabinets for the Museum. Playfair then reported that he wished to 'enter into a contract with Mr Trotter for the joiner work of the Cabinets of

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<sup>21</sup> Henry Cockburn, quoted in Playfair, A.G., *Notes on the Scottish Family of Playfair*, Tunbridge Wells, 1913 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), p.7.

the Museum...'<sup>22</sup> Trotter was obviously the architect's first choice for the execution of the work, but:

...the Meeting agreed that it would be improper in them to depart from the Resolution of taking estimates for the several parts of the work, by authorising Mr Playfair to contract with Mr trotter for the joiner work of the cabinet without taking estimates from other cabinet makers, unless it could be shown that they should do so from the practice which Mr Trotter might have had in work of this kind or otherwise...<sup>23</sup>

The Clerk was then instructed to write to Professor Jameson for his opinion on the matter. The College Trust Minute Book (No.2) includes a minute of the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1818, where Professor Jameson writes, with regard to the Museum cabinets, that:

...cases for the objects of Natural History ought to be made of the best materials, and by workmen long experienced in this difficult kind of work. If the cases are faulty in the materials, or are only moderately well executed...the collection...will speedily decay, and hence the absolute necessity of the utmost care and skill being bestowed on their execution, and in the selection of the materials...very few workmen can be entrusted with this kind of work, and it can never be executed by competition.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> E.C.A., 2/1-2/97, College Commissioners' Minutes 1815-1818, 2 June, 1818.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No. 2, 1816-1828, 12 June 1818, p.145.

Professor Jameson, having previous experience of Trotter's museum work, was obviously confident in his ability to undertake such an important commission. He goes on to say that the only plan that should be proposed is:

...to select a person possessing the requisite talent and skill, and whose means are so ample as to allow him the advantages of the selection of the best materials and the employment of the most experienced workmen. In Edinburgh, the only person who combines all these requisites is Mr Trotter in Prince's (sic.) Street.<sup>25</sup>

Obviously, this letter is full of persuasive rhetoric in order for Professor Jameson to get his way, but it still reinforces the point made above with regard to the 'first' Museum. The success of the Trotter firm meant that it had the means to gain large and important commissions and thereby perpetuate its success. Jameson's claim that Trotter was the *only* person capable of undertaking the job, although being stated to satisfy the professor's own agenda, shows the monopoly that Trotter's business had in the sphere of Edinburgh cabinet-making at this time.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1818 the Commissioners made a decision:

Upon considering which letter (Jameson's) the meeting were unanimously of opinion that it would be highly inexpedient to run the least risk of the destruction of the ...museum by having the joiner work of the Cases executed upon Competition Estimates, altho' this might be the means of saving a few

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.146.

pounds; and therefore...authorise Mr Playfair to enter into a contract with Mr Trotter of Princes Street for the execution of the same.<sup>26</sup>

This indicates firstly that Trotter was not the most competitively priced cabinet-maker, either due to the quality of his work or his monopoly of the field. Secondly, this indicates the importance to the Commissioners of the preservation of the collections. Their safety was to be put before financial considerations. The issue of preservation is also foremost in Professor Jameson's letter, quoted above, where he states that if the work is not perfectly executed, the collection will decay. The especially delicate nature of a natural history collection, with its animal specimens particularly susceptible to damp and pests, made the preservation issue particularly important.

The Estimates, Contracts and Accounts for the building of the College are held by the Edinburgh City Archives. They are incomplete, and also overlap in many places, with accounts being subsumed into later overviews of expenditure. They therefore do not provide a complete picture of Trotter's work at the Museum. They do, however, offer some fascinating insights into the kind of furniture provided for the Museum, and can help to piece together the chronology of the various different stages of furnishing that were carried out as the collections grew.

The estimate entitled 'Estimate No.1 for cabinets from Mr Trotter' is dated the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 1818. It is stated that the estimate is agreeable to the plans and specifications by

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<sup>26</sup> E.C.A., 2/1-2/97, College Commissioners' Minutes, 1815-1818, 12 June 1818.

Playfair, and that the total cost is £569. A summary of the details of the estimate is as follows:

- Six cabinets with 14 drawers, enclosed with a panelled door, the upper part with nine shelves enclosed with one door. To be finished with polished plate glass.
- Two cabinets with drawers underneath and doors on top.
- Four cabinets for the end of the Museum (details not included).
- Two further cabinets (details not included).<sup>27</sup>

The estimate also lists the furniture to be provided for the 'Gallery' area of the Museum:

- '6 cabinets 18 fut 4 long over pillasters and 6 feet 8 high, and 18 inches deep, containing 7 shelves in the height and 3 in the length enclosed with 6 wainscot doors to be filled with their own polished plate glass, each cabinet to be made in 3 parts with 4 niche pillasters between.'
- Two cabinets in three parts for the end of the Museum.<sup>28</sup>

The quoted section above shows the precision of Playfair's specifications. The total cost of the six cabinets in the quoted section is £160.10.0. Trotter specifies that there will be an increase in price if doors and drawers are to be made of mahogany.

The glass for the Museum cabinets was a matter of debate. A report by Playfair for the Commissioners dated the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 1818 informs them that:

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<sup>27</sup> E.C.A., 3/38-3/57, Estimates, Contracts and Accounts (College), Estimate No.1, 1 June 1818.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



With the very best Crown Glass the objects within the Cabinets will appear distorted, while with Plate Glass, they will be distinctly visible, and the general appearance of the whole room much improved.<sup>29</sup>

Playfair goes on to explain the expense of the plate glass:

...the expense of Crown Glass would be 280 pounds, that of Plate Glass 720 pounds, being a difference of 440 pounds...I understand that Government allows a deduction of 6 shillings and sixpence halfpenny per superficial foot on all plate Glass for Exportation, being in fact a deduction of the whole of the Excise Duties.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, if an application was made to Government for the excise duties to be deducted, the plate glass would cost 530 pounds, a difference of 250 with crown glass. It was decided by the Commissioners not to apply to Government regarding this matter, for fear of affecting the Treasury's grant for the College building works. However, a minute of the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 1819 explains that Trotter had applied to the British Plate Glass Manufactory for the glass, which should have cost £1291.11.5, '...but in consequence of Mr Trotter's exertions, and the magnitude of the order...', the same glass had been procured for £1092.19.10.<sup>31</sup>

Estimate Number 2 for cabinets from Trotter is dated the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 1818. The total cost is unclear, but appears to be £207, plus an additional £408. As well as

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<sup>29</sup> E.C.A., 2/98-2/165, College Commissioners' Minutes, 1818-1824, 2 June 1818.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No. 2, 1816-1828, pp 196-197.

various cabinets and tables for the 'Upper Museum', 'Side Room' and 'Gallery of Upper Museum', 17 cabinets and two large tables are detailed, intended for the 'Under Museum'. These are marked as not executed.<sup>32</sup>

The cabinets in this estimate are likely to be those referred to in a Commissioners' Minute of the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1818. They state that Playfair has requested that:

...certain additional Cabinets and tables for the Upper Museum and side room such as were in all good Museums...should be furnished.<sup>33</sup>

Although this request is minuted at a later date than that of Trotter's estimate, it is highly probable that Playfair would have procured the estimate in order to furnish the Commissioners with it as he put in his request.

A Commissioners' Minute of the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 1820 includes a note from Professor Jameson regarding the College Museum, where the rapid increase of the collection '...has induced me to make some enquiry as to the expence of converting the lower room into a museum', the estimated additional cost being £500-£600.<sup>34</sup> Jameson's plan was to remove the pillars placed on the side of the room (these being re-used in the new library), fitting the sides and ends of the room with glass cases 14 feet high, and to place a few tables in the middle of the room for the display of minerals, etc. Jameson is keen to point out that if the pillars stayed:

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<sup>32</sup> E.C.A., 3/38-3/57, Estimates, Contracts and Accounts (College), Estimate No. 2, 11 Dec. 1818.

<sup>33</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No.2, 1816-1828, 12 Dec. 1818.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 24 Feb. 1820.

...fifty feet of the wall will be sacrificed – the general effect of the collection destroyed and the most important feature of the arrangement vizt the connection and relation of the different tribes of animals will be lost.<sup>35</sup>

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1820, the estimate from Trotter for furniture for this lower room was accepted, excepting the fact that the price of the chairs was limited to 3 guineas per chair, and that crimson cloth was not decided upon at this point (the Commissioners wondering if grey might not look better).<sup>36</sup>

The estimate (Number 3) is as follows:

‘6 Large mahogany tables with astragal ends on richly carved Massive legs the tops framed, and inlaid with fine crimson cloth.’ @£23.10

12 Mahogany Chairs fully carved in the backs, and the seats finished in best red Morrocco leather’ £56.14.

3 Handsome Mahogany Tables for standing in the Windows on tiered pedestals and block plinths the tops inlaid with fine Crimson Cloth @£10.15

3 glass cases for standing on the tops of window tables @£8.6.6

126 yds of stout broad Crimson Drugget for the floors of Museum Galleries and Wheeling stairs @6/6 40.19.

70 brass stair rods and Batts @2/6 8.15.

36 yds Grey Drugget for Upper Side gallery @4/3 7.13.

5 Large Roller window Blinds of Holland with Patent Brass Mounting, tassels, and cord complete @45/11.5.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 20 July 1820.

This estimate highlights the fact that as well as the more utilitarian fixed cabinets, cases, etc., the Museum commission also included a number of more lavish pieces more akin to domestic furniture. The mahogany tables do not have a specified function, and are therefore not adapted in their form to specific usage in the same way as many of the cabinets. Ornament is more prevalent here too, with 'richly carved massive legs' and 'thermed pedestals' being mentioned.

It is also interesting to note that although Trotter could provide richly carved mahogany tables and chairs, he was also the supplier of many sundry articles such as stair rods. The scale of his operation meant that he could keep sizable quantities of such items in stock, allowing him to provide a complete furnishing service, down to the last detail.

By this point in the furnishing of the Museum, Trotter had already made a considerable profit. Although his own personal accounts are not extant, preventing an examination of the amount of money laid out on workmen and materials, the sums paid to him were sizeable. A Commissioners' Minute of the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 1820 includes information about the accounts due to various people, including Trotter, who was owed £1808.6.5 '...for the cabinets and furniture of the Museum.'<sup>38</sup>

An estimate (Number 4) from Trotter for glass for the Museum, dated the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1820, implies that even more furniture had been supplied by this date:

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 29 Dec. 1820.

'8 polished Mirror plates for the large centre octagon table

£32

Or

7 (?) patent glass plates	11.12.
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patent glass for the 2 large oblong tables	18.10.
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Or

Common glass. Best Crown	9.5.2', <sup>39</sup>
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Fortuitously, some of the accounts (written out by the Commissioners) that correspond to Trotter's estimates are extant, and these provide a wealth of information to flesh out that provided by the estimates.

Account Number 5 corresponds to the estimates numbered 1, 2, 3 and 4. It is rather lengthy, and has therefore been included as an appendix to this thesis.<sup>40</sup> However, certain entries are worth quoting here, as they highlight a variety of aspects of Trotter's work at the Museum.

The section of the account which corresponds to Estimate Number 2 includes this entry:

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<sup>39</sup> E.C.A., 3/38-3/57, Estimates, Contracts and Accounts (College), Estimate No.4, 9 Aug. 1820.

<sup>40</sup> Appendix 2.

An Elegant Octagon Table of fine Mahogany on a massive pedestal finished with sunk panells and richly carved ornaments with a glass case for the top of do. wt. carved & gilded rail supported on pillars for centre of room.<sup>41</sup>

This illustrates the luxurious nature of some of the Museum pieces, as well as the precise nature of the specifications. Other pieces from the same estimate, however, were simpler in design, e.g. '2 Neat Mahogany Tables the tops covered with fine crimson cloth on square pedestals wt. ball feet.'<sup>42</sup> This suggests that money was spent where necessary in order to create a feeling of splendour appropriate to the collections, yet was not spent unnecessarily, i.e. when a plain utilitarian piece would suffice.

Also from the section of the account which corresponds to Estimate Number 2, there is an entry for:

2 long cabinets with glass cases on top containing 36 Wainscot drawers each finished with a brass label plate and 2 knobs inclosed by 6 bound panelled doors.<sup>43</sup>

This illustrates the grand scale of some of the pieces provided by Trotter's firm, indicating that he must have had the means to employ a sizeable workforce, in order to complete suites of such pieces within a reasonable time.

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<sup>41</sup> E.C.A., 3/38-3/57, Estimates, Contracts and Accounts (College), Account No. 5, 19 Feb. 1819. This date is referred to throughout the account, but is erroneous, according to the dates of the estimates, as it covers work of a variety of dates.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

Another entry from the section of the account corresponding to Estimate Number 2 is for:

2 glafs cases for the side Gallery of long room the under part made to receive insects, Cases inclosed with bound panelled doors 6 upper doors of Wainscot the backs framed and covered with canvas.<sup>44</sup>

It can be seen here that some of the pieces were designed and made with an explicit purpose in mind. Such pieces would only have had a use within a museum context, and are therefore extremely unlikely to have been taken from stock. Fig. 3 shows a display case made for the Museum by Trotter (now held by the National Museums of Scotland). Although the nature of its intended contents are not known, it is still a useful example of furniture created specifically to function in a museum context.

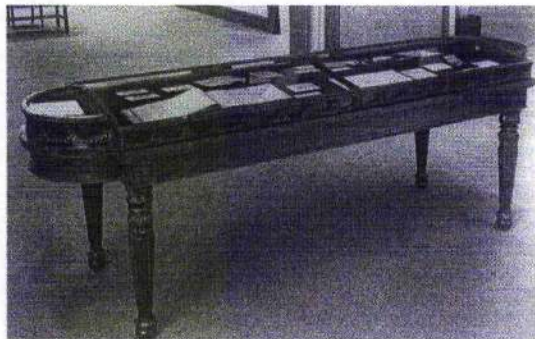


Fig.3: One of Trotter's display cases for the Natural History Museum of the College of Edinburgh, made in 1829 (from A.G. Fraser, *The Building of Old College: Adam, Playfair & the University of Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1989 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), fig. 7.14).

Perhaps the most fascinating section of the account is that which covers the expenses that had not been estimated for. This includes the in-situ adjustments and finishings

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.



by the workmen, made in order to prepare the cabinets for use, e.g. ‘...taking off casing & putting on doors of Cabinets removing Boxes & putting Plates into Cabinets...’<sup>45</sup> There follows a whole list of sundries necessary to finish the job, including over 80 dozen brass label plates, nails and screws, sand paper, 254 feet of brass astragal for tables, and even wire for some deer horns.<sup>46</sup> Every tiny sundry had a price, carefully listed.

Account Number 7 (see Appendix 3) is less lengthy than Account Number 5, but is a bit of a mystery, as no details are contained within it regarding the estimate to which it corresponds. The ‘Upper’, ‘Large’, ‘Under’ and ‘Side’ Museum are mentioned, and many of the items are small, individual pieces, rather than a coherent suite of furniture. This suggests that the account could be the one that Professor Jameson handed in to the Commissioners which was declared as ‘unsanctioned’. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 1821, an account was presented to the Commissioners amounting to £390.1.2 for furnishings to the Museum. Playfair, who was present at the meeting, claimed that he had not ordered any of the articles in the account. The Clerk was instructed to inform Jameson and Trotter that the Commissioners did not consider their funds liable for the account, as the items were not ordered by themselves or Playfair.<sup>47</sup>

The total cost declared on Account Number 7 is £389.7.8, which corresponds approximately to this ‘unsanctioned’ account.<sup>48</sup> An article on the first page of

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No.2, 1816-1828, 26 Feb. 1821.

<sup>48</sup> E.C.A., 3/38-3/57 Estimates, Contracts and Accounts (College), Account No.7, Feb. 1819. As this date was listed as the date of Account No. 5, and was erroneous, the same may well be true of this account.

Account Number 7 is ‘...a large board with pullies’ for Professor Jameson’s room, which lends support to this theory.<sup>49</sup> The only evidence that goes against this theory is the fact that the account appears to have been checked by Playfair. In his hand, ‘a frame for supporting a large fish’ is marked with a cross. A note by the architect at the bottom of the page states ‘Deduct article marked X’.<sup>50</sup> As Playfair claimed not to have ordered any of the articles in Jameson’s ‘unsanctioned’ account, it would seem strange if he had marked only one item to be deducted when checking the account.<sup>51</sup>

Account Number 9 (see Appendix 1), although containing mostly furniture provided for other parts of the College, does include some entries relating to the Museum. These are not tied explicitly to an estimate, but date from November 1821 to September 1822. They are mostly concerned with repairs and adjustments, but there are also a few rather lavish pieces, such as:

A Mahogany Ottoman with carved vase ends nicely stuff with a bordered hair mattresses covered with...Red Morocco finished with silk gimp and tufts.<sup>52</sup>

This cost £23.10., and seems to have been part of a group of furniture to add to the comfort of the museum. 24 large mahogany chairs were ordered at the same time, with two elbow chairs to match, an oblong mahogany table, a mahogany deception

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Estimate No. 2 refers to the ‘Upper Museum’ and ‘Side Room’, amongst other areas of the Museum, but the furniture listed does not correspond closely with that included in Account No. 7.

<sup>52</sup> E.C.A., 3/38-3/57, Estimates, Contracts and Accounts (College), Account No. 9, Dec. 1820-Nov. 1823. The 1805 Edinburgh Cabinet-Makers’ Book of Prices includes, on page 61, the specifications of a Pembroke Deception Table: ‘Two feet three inches long, two feet eight inches wide when open, corners of the flaps octagon or round, one end to fold down, supported by a quadrant, one fly bracket on each side.’ ‘Extras’ included making the ‘other end’ fold down. (in Jones, D., *The Edinburgh Cabinet and Chair Makers’ Books of Prices 1805-25*, Cupar, 2000).

Pembroke table, and two mahogany hat stands.<sup>53</sup> It appears from this that the museum was undergoing continuous alterations and additions as new collections and new visitors arrived.

The College Commissioners' Minutes for the 17<sup>th</sup> of April 1823 state that Baron Clerk Rattray (of the Standing Committee) had received a letter from Principal Baird of the College. Baird had inspected the collection given to the Museum by Lord Hastings, and stated that:

They are perishable – and there is no place for receiving them till the Lower Room of the Museum is fitted up – at present they lie in the original packing boxes in the Janitor's Old house – exposed to injuries from insects and other causes – and if they lie much longer must inevitably be wholly lost.<sup>54</sup>

The fitting up of the lower room had first been suggested in February 1820 (see above), and yet was obviously still not complete. The accommodation crisis with regard to the collections continued. At a Standing Committee meeting of the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 1823, a letter from Professor Jameson was read, in which he urged the fitting up of a set of 'Model Rooms' for the Museum, in order to preserve articles which might otherwise decay.<sup>55</sup> It is unclear whether this request was actually complied with. What is clear is that there was an increasingly desperate need for additional accommodation for the collections. This was exacerbated by the fact that the Museum was one of the first sections of the 'new' College to be erected and fitted out. This meant that temporary storage for the 'overspill' of the collections had to be found in the old,

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<sup>53</sup> E.C.A., Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> E.C.A., 2/98-2/165, College Commissioners' Minutes, 1818-1824, 17 April 1823.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 9 May 1823.

damp and decaying buildings of the 'old' College or the incomplete parts of the later developments, which were highly unsuitable for the storage of Natural History objects.

### **The 'Extended' Museum**

A draft report prepared for the Treasury, included in the College Commissioners' Minute of the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 1824, states that:

Since the College Museum has been placed in the apartments allotted to it by the commissioners that noble collection has attracted much attention and has become such an object of general interest that contributions have poured in from all quarters of the Globe of articles curious and rare which require to be preserved and placed for public inspection...<sup>56</sup>

The solution to this problem was the fitting up of three galleries over the entrance gates to the College, measuring in total 150 feet in length.<sup>57</sup> On the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 1824, two sealed estimates for the fitting up of the new galleries were laid before the Standing Committee. One was from Trotter, and the other from A.O. Turnbull. Turnbull's offer, at £1067, was the lowest. Mr Playfair was instructed to accept this lower offer '...provided Mr Turnbull could satisfy him of the possibility of his procuring sufficiently seasoned Materials and proper workmen...'<sup>58</sup> At this later stage

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<sup>56</sup> E.C.A., 2/166-2/226, College Commissioners' Minutes, 1824-1829, 19 Nov. 1824.

<sup>57</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No. 2, 1816-1828, 3 Feb. 1827, p 514.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 13 Dec. 1824, pp 422-423.

of College building, it seems that the purse strings had tightened, obliging the Commissioners to accept the lowest offer, regardless of Trotter's experience.

Problems soon arose with Turnbull's offer. At a Standing Committee meeting of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 1824, Playfair stated that he had found Turnbull at first not prepared to state where he had / was to procure seasoned wood for the cabinets. Although he later named a supplier, Playfair had thought it prudent to communicate with Trotter on the matter.<sup>59</sup> Trotter wrote to Playfair on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1824, explaining that:

...the Oak intended to have been appropriated to the cabinets in the Galleries of the College has been in my wood-yard for upwards of 3 years, and some of it not less than 5 years, which is a circumstance of considerable importance in work of such a nature and of such extent.<sup>60</sup>

As has been mentioned above, the size of Trotter's operation allowed him to keep in stock large quantities of expensive materials, knowing that they would be used. On the basis of his supplies, the meeting decided that the commission should be transferred to him. The work was almost finished by March 1826, when the Standing Committee agreed to pay Trotter for the work, provided he complete the necessary finishing touches, such as producing keys for all the locks.<sup>61</sup> Sadly, no accounts which can be directly linked to this phase of the Museum are extant, making it impossible to compare the earlier phases of Museum furnishing with this later phase.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 23 Dec. 1824, p.441.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.442.

<sup>61</sup> E.C.A., 2/166-2/226 College Commissioners' Minutes, 1824-1829, 25 Dec. 1825.

## The Wider Museum Context

In order to fully assess Trotter's achievements at the College Museum, it is necessary to draw comparisons with similar commissions by other prominent Scottish cabinet-makers. The fitting out of Glasgow's Hunterian Museum by the Glasgow firm Cleland & Jack in 1809 provides scope for such comparisons. The museum's collection was based on the collections of the anatomist Dr William Hunter, and included items from the natural sciences.<sup>62</sup> The collection was housed in its own temple-like building, designed by William Stark (who also designed the interior of the Faculty of Advocates Library, discussed in Chapter 11), which was part of a wider movement to give Glasgow the aspect of a classical city.<sup>63</sup> In this way, the two museums have much in common. The firm of Cleland & Jack also has parallels with Trotter's firm. They were well-established, being first listed in the *Glasgow Directory* in 1791, and they provided a range of services, including property leasing and funerals.<sup>64</sup> They also situated themselves in the heart of the city, first at Virginia Street (moving there in c1799), and later in Trongate.<sup>65</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting parallel between the furniture provided by Trotter for the Edinburgh College Museum and that provided for the Hunterian by Cleland and Jack is the abundance of domestic-style furniture. An invoice (held by Glasgow University Archives) relating to furniture supplied between May 1808 and February 1809 includes in the list of furniture provided 24 'Bamboo' chairs, writing tables,

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<sup>62</sup> Blair, C. and Jones, D., 'Furnishing the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow Style, 1809', *Regional Furniture*, Volume V, 1991, pp 86-92, p.86.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p.90.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

Pembroke tables and bason stands.<sup>66</sup> Such an abundance of chairs can be seen in Trotter's Account Number 9 for the College Museum, which dates from November 1821 to September 1822. In fact, exactly the same number – 24 – chairs were listed in the account (although differing in that they were mahogany, and were to be accompanied by two matching elbow chairs).<sup>67</sup> The Cleland & Jack invoice and the Trotter account also both include Pembroke tables, although Trotter lists a 'Deception Pembroke' specifically, whereas Cleland & Jack do not.<sup>68</sup>

Cleland & Jack's invoices are much more specific than Trotter's estimates and accounts with regard to explaining the style / decorative elements of the pieces provided. For example, the Glasgow firm's first invoice includes 24 'Bamboo' chairs, while the second includes eight 'Roman' chairs.<sup>69</sup> The latter can be seen in a view of the museum from Dr Hunter's bookplate (Fig.4).<sup>70</sup> A library table from the second invoice is listed in a detailed fashion, being described as a '...large circular Library Table on triangular block and Lion's paws bronzed, fine locks to pass, Drawers figured wt. Ivory and top covered with fine green cloth...'<sup>71</sup> In contrast, Trotter's Estimates and Accounts for the College Museum include much vaguer terms. Items are described as 'richly' or 'fully' carved, but the style / decorative detail is not explicitly stated. There are some exceptions, however, such as three tables mentioned in Estimate Number 3 of 1820, described as:

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.86.

<sup>67</sup> E.C.A., 3/38-3/57, Estimates, Contracts and Accounts (College), Account No. 9, Dec. 1820-Nov. 1823.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Blair, C. & Jones, D., *Op Cit*, p.86.

<sup>70</sup> This view shows that the museum, with its wall-mounted shelves, free-standing glass-topped cabinets in the middle of the room, Doric columns and skylight, resembled closely the arrangement of the Edinburgh College Museum.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.87.



3 Handsome Mahogany Tables for standing in the Windows on thermed pedestals and block plinths the tops inlaid with fine Crimson Cloth.<sup>72</sup>

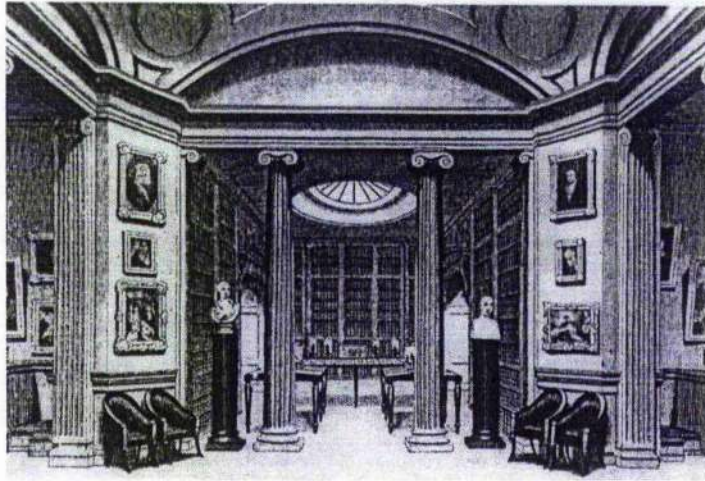


Fig.4: View of the Hunterian Museum, a print from the bookplate of Dr William Hunter (whose collection formed the basis of the Museum), no date (from Celine Blair and David Jones, 'Furnishing the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow Style, 1809', *Regional Furniture*, vol. V, 1991, pp 86-92, fig.1).

Account Number 9 provides another example:

A Mahogany Ottoman with carved vase ends nicely stufed with a bordered hair matts covered with...Red Morocco finished with silk gimp and tufts.<sup>73</sup>

Despite the different levels of detail provided in Cleland & Jack's invoices and Trotter's Estimates and Accounts, it appears that the former supplied more highly fashionable pieces. 'Bamboo' and 'Roman' chairs (the latter comparable to chairs supplied by Gillow of Lancaster) can be contrasted with the richly carved mahogany

<sup>72</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No. 2, 1816-1828, 20 July 1820.

<sup>73</sup> E.C.A., Estimates, Contracts and Accounts (College), Account No. 9, Dec. 1820-Nov. 1823.

variety supplied by Trotter.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, the table with triangular block and lion's paw feet can be contrasted with the rather more restrained themed pedestals and block plinths of Trotter's tables. However, it should be noted that a comparison of the contemporary interior views of both museums (see Fig.s 4 and 5) shows that the glass-topped display cabinets provided by Trotter are more richly carved than those in the Hunterian print. It may be reasonable to assert, therefore, that although Cleland and Jack provided highly fashionable pieces for the Hunterian, Trotter included richly ornamented pieces to give an opulent effect at the Edinburgh College Museum. The contrasting levels of detail between the former firm's invoices and the latter's Estimates and Accounts may therefore be explained by the fact that they were different sorts of documents, the invoices perhaps requiring the most detail in order to satisfy the museum's commissioners that they were getting their money's worth.

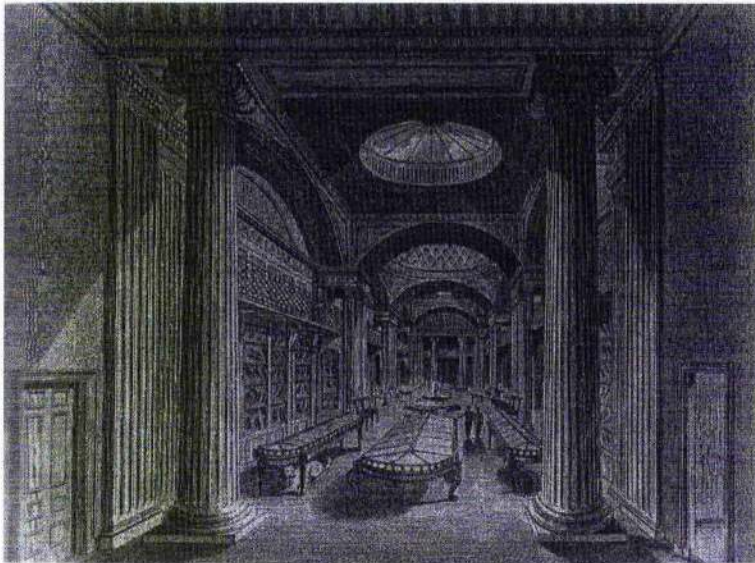


Fig.5: View of the Natural History Museum of the College of Edinburgh, engraved by W.H. Lizars c1822 as a letter-head for Professor Jameson, Curator of the Museum (from A.G. Fraser, *The Building of Old College: Adam, Playfair & the University of Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1989 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), fig. 7.15).

<sup>74</sup> Blair, C. and Jones, D., Op Cit, p.86.

A comparison of the colour schemes of the two interiors is rather interesting. From the furniture mentioned, the colours used for the Hunterian appear to have been crimson (the 'Roman' chairs being covered in crimson moreen), black (the 'Roman' chairs being painted in that colour), and green (the lion's paw-footed library table being covered with green cloth, and the covers provided for furniture also being that colour). These colours, in addition to the prevailing rich brown of the mahogany used and the decorative touches in brass and ivory, must have produced a rather rich and stately effect. The College of Edinburgh Museum included the extensive use of crimson cloth as an inlay for tabletops, as well as in the form of drugget flooring. Grey was also used for drugget flooring. Seat furniture was upholstered in red morocco leather, whilst brass label plates and the occasional use of gilding provided contrast. Crimson, then, was used in both commissions, but the Glasgow museum also featured green in its colour scheme, as well as a more extensive use of brass. Both colour schemes seem, therefore, to have been fairly restrained, in keeping with the notion of museums as places of education rather than frivolity. The Hunterian, however, with its overtly fashionable pieces and contrasting colours, seems to have been the more exuberant of the two.

A small aside should perhaps be made regarding the similarities that can be seen between the Glasgow and Edinburgh firms through the details of these commissions. Cleland and Jack's second invoice includes a number of sundries, such as oil cloth, rope matts, carpet, brooms and furniture covers.<sup>75</sup> This ability to provide every single item necessary to complete a commission is seen in Trotter's Estimates and Accounts.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., pp 86-87.



Both firms were obviously highly successful, being able to keep in stock a sizable array of sundries in order to satisfy every whim of their clients.

### **The Functioning Museum**

In order to get a feel for the Museum as a functioning establishment, it is necessary to turn to contemporary descriptions. William Stark, writing in 1825 (before the extended Museum had been fitted up) describes the Museum in detail, his description of the 'Upper Great Room' being the most notable. He explains that the room is lighted from the roof by three large lanterns, and from the side by three great windows. A gallery runs around the whole apartment, and 'The Walls of the room are everywhere covered with splendid cases, covered with plate glass, for containing objects of natural history.'<sup>76</sup> He then goes on to describe the gallery and some of the collections:

The cases in the gallery are appropriated for the classical and magnificent collection of birds purchased by the College from M. Dufresne of Paris; the cases under the gallery for the valuable collection of birds already in the College. It is said that the entire collection amounts to upwards of 3000 specimens. In the middle of the room, the floor of which is iron and painted, are tables covered with plate glass, and containing very fine collections of shells, insects and corals.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Stark, *Op Cit*, p.184.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*.

Fig.5, a letter-head engraved for Professor Jameson by W.H. Lizars in c.1822, ties in with Starks description.

Stark explains that the 'Lower Great Room' is appropriated to the quadropeds and other large animals, while the 'Lower External Gallery' contains the collection of insects and a cabinet of minerals. The 'Upper External Gallery' is:

...90 ft long, divided into 3 apartments of great beauty, and lighted from the roof by elegant lanterns. The smaller apartments contain preparations in comparative anatomy; the middle and larger room is appropriated for minerals. Another large room is to contain a collection of all the rocks and Minerals of the British Empire, arranged in Geographical order.<sup>78</sup>

Bower, in his *The History of the University of Edinburgh, Volume III*, published in 1830, discusses the arrangement of the Museum specimens:

Among others may be mentioned a cameleopard, which is of extraordinary height. The collection of birds is very extensive. It is the third in Europe, only being exceeded by those of Paris and Berlin. There are upwards of 3,000 different specimens. What greatly enhances the splendour of the sight is, that every individual throughout the whole kingdom, which the museum contains, is in the highest state of preservation, no pains nor expense having been spared to accomplish the end in view. The professor has also studied to introduce

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

scientific arrangement, which renders it more interesting to the philosopher, as well as more agreeable to the spectator.<sup>79</sup>

The above passage clearly indicates that Trotter's expert workmanship had contributed directly to the preservation of the collection.

A Town Council Minute of the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 1820 states that the Museum was to be open to the public on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays from 11am until 4 pm. The entrance fee was 2 Shillings 6d. Those who had attended a full course of lectures on Natural History at the College could obtain an annual pass for £1.1.0, with each lady of the same family being able to obtain such a pass for 10s 6d. Ladies in general were to pay £1.1.0 for an annual pass. The availability of annual passes, together with the provision of domestic-style furniture (see Account Number 9 above) suggests that in addition to object storage, object display (for educational purposes), and the creation of a lavish space which could act as a centrepiece of the College (reflecting well upon the collections and the College itself), the Museum had another function. It was to be a social space, where the well-to-do of the New Town and the Southern Districts (who used the South Bridge to enter the New Town) could mingle in comfort and elegance.

The College Museum of Natural History should be seen as one of Trotter's key commissions, both within the context of his work at the College, and of his oeuvre as a whole. It provided a stream of income for his business from 1808 to 1826. As a focal point for the College, his work at the Museum was seen by hundreds of students

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<sup>79</sup> Bower, *Op Cit*, p.364.

and visitors, raising his profile in Edinburgh and further afield. It also allowed him to showcase the diversity of his talents, by requiring such a wide range of furniture. Elaborately carved mahogany tables and ottomans, intended to enhance the comfort and splendour of the galleries, were juxtaposed with vast cabinets designed and executed with the preservation of their specific contents in mind. Cases with dozens of carefully labelled drawers provided homes for mineralogical specimens, while glass cases with framed canvas backs displayed insects, and others exotic birds. Only through close examination of the available contemporary sources can the Museum, and Trotter's work there, come to life. After such close examination, it is easy to understand why Professor Jameson was able to state that 'Even in our time, I hope the Museum of the University of Edinburgh will equal in utility, extent and splendour the most celebrated of those on the Continent.'<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No. 2, 1816-1828, 10 May 1824, pp 400-401.



## **Chapter 6: The Speculative Society Rooms**

The Speculative Society rooms, situated at the northeast corner of the College of Edinburgh area, are important within Trotter's oeuvre for two reasons. Firstly, they complete the picture of his work at the College, arguably one of his most prestigious commissions. Secondly, the importance of the Speculative Society itself meant that his work was seen by a cross-section of the finest of Edinburgh society. The rooms also allow a rare glimpse of a Trotter commission which has been left almost totally unchanged since being fitted up. The space Trotter furnished in 1818-1819 functions today as it always has, as a meeting place for one of Edinburgh's most well respected societies.

The society was instituted in 1764, at a time when literary, scientific and philosophical societies were flourishing in many Universities, but in particular at Edinburgh. The anonymous *History of the Speculative Society from its Institution in 1764*, published in 1845, quotes a Dr Welsh. In his 'Life' of Dr Thomas Brown, Welsh discusses the conditions peculiar to the University of Edinburgh that allowed societies to flourish:

This practice (of the students forming literary associations) exists in many Universities, but it has been carried to a much greater extent in Edinburgh than elsewhere; a circumstance that has been ascribed to that system of education...which affords to the students few opportunities of distinguishing

themselves in the presence of their teachers, while it leaves them the greatest latitude in the conduct of their studies, and in the disposal of their time.<sup>1</sup>

Welsh is perhaps referring here to the broad nature of the curriculum at Edinburgh at this time, and the large numbers in attendance at lectures. Whatever the conditions that produced these societies, not all of them flourished long-term, many enjoying a short burst of great popularity, before disappearing when their early stalwarts left the University / the city.

The Speculative Society can be seen as one of the most successful of all the societies that arose at the College of Edinburgh. Others, such as the Royal Medical Society, were also highly successful, but moved their premises away from the College area, leaving the Speculative as the only student Society with a permanent base there. The society was instituted on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 1764 by six students, including William Creech (later a publisher), John Bruce (later a Professor at the College), and Allan Maconochie (Later Lord Meadowbank. An eminent Judge, Maconochie was also a Professor at the College).<sup>2</sup> The aims of the society are summed up by Henry Cockburn, who remarked that:

In November 1799 I entered the Speculative Society; an institution which has trained more young men to public speaking, talent and liberal thought, than all the other private institutions in Scotland.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anon., *History of the Speculative Society from its Institution in 1764*, Edinburgh, 1845, p.62.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, S. (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XXXV, London, 1893, pp 256-257.

<sup>3</sup> Cockburn, H., *Memorials of His Time*, Edinburgh, 1975 (Original edition 1856), p.74.

These skills of ‘public speaking, talent and liberal thought’ were all cultivated through the society’s practice of requiring its members to present essays for criticism and to take part in debates on subjects of historical, literary and political interest (although the society had no specific political leanings). A selection of the titles of debates held illustrates the broad spectrum of topics discussed:

- December 7<sup>th</sup> 1764 – ‘Whether does a married or a single state tend most to promote virtue’
- February 1<sup>st</sup> 1814 – ‘Ought combinations among workmen for raising their wages to be punished?’
- January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1815 – ‘Are the poems of Ossian authentic?’
- March 13<sup>th</sup> 1821 – ‘Ought there to be a legal provision for the poor?’<sup>4</sup>

The essential principles of the Speculative’s constitution have altered very little since its institution. New members were to be recommended by current members, and were admitted if accepted by a ballot. A prospective member did not have to be a student of the College to join, and the society was, to all intents and purposes, an entirely separate entity from the College. This relationship is best summed up in the anonymous ‘History’ of the society mentioned above:

It is understood that the Professors have such right of control over a society, whose premises are locally situated within the college precincts, as would entitle them to make any enquiry personally as to the proceedings; but they are

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<sup>4</sup> Anon., Op Cit, p.68.

not *ex officio* members; and the Society has no further alliance with the University.<sup>5</sup>

The society attracted some of the finest minds of the day. In addition to the founders mentioned above, other gentlemen of note connected to the society included Henry Cockburn (Lord Cockburn, a prominent legal figure and author), Dugald Stewart (the Philosopher, a lecturer at the University of Edinburgh and linchpin of Edinburgh society), Francis Horner (the Politician and joint-founder of the *Edinburgh Review*), and Sir Walter Scott. This small sample indicates that Bower, in his *History of the University of Edinburgh volume III*, published in 1830, may not have been exaggerating when he said of the Speculative that:

The celebrity of this institution, and the many eminent divines, illustrious statesmen, lawyers and physicians, that have been members...and who, for the last fifty years, have made so distinguished a figure in every department of literature and science, throughout the British Empire, render its history an object of singular curiosity and interest.<sup>6</sup>

It is against this illustrious background that Trotter's commission to furnish the rooms of the Speculative should be seen.

The main sources available regarding Trotter's work for the society are the its own Minutes (Volume V, 1815-1825), its bills, and the Minutes (loose bundles) and Minute Books of the College Commissioners.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.60.

<sup>6</sup> Bower, A., *The History of the University of Edinburgh Volume III*, Edinburgh, 1830, p.374.

The meeting place of the society between its institution in 1764 and the year 1769 is not known. In April 1769, however, a committee was appointed by the society to negotiate with the Town Council (in their position as Patrons of the College) for permission to build premises on the College area.<sup>7</sup> Negotiations were successful. The building was to be erected at the expense of the society, on the understanding that it might have to be demolished to make way for new College buildings at some point in the future.<sup>8</sup> Permission was granted in 1775 to build a lobby as an addition to the existing structure.<sup>9</sup>

The pamphlet prepared by the Senatus Academicus of the College in October 1815, entitled 'Report from the Senatus Academicus of the University of Edinburgh on the accommodation required in the New Buildings', stated that the Speculative Society were to be given a meeting room, a library and an ante-room in the new College.<sup>10</sup> The origin of the right of the society to claim such accommodation is unclear. It may be that as a well-established and illustrious society, the Speculative reflected well on the College, and that it was therefore in the College's own best interests to keep the society's premises within the College area. The Senatus' statement may also reflect the fact that the society was a subscriber to the new buildings.<sup>11</sup>

An alternative theory is that the 1769 and 1775 Acts passed by the Town Council regarding the accommodation of the society included rights to replacement

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<sup>7</sup> Anon., Op cit., p.20.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.21.

<sup>10</sup> Fraser, A.G., *The Building of Old College: Adam, Playfair and the University of Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1989 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), p.140.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.101.

accommodation. This assertion is supported by a College Commissioners' Minute of the 16<sup>th</sup> of March 1818.<sup>12</sup> Here, it is noted that the Speculative had sent the Commissioners a 'Memorial' regarding their claim to accommodation in the new buildings, which quoted the 1769 and 1775 Acts.<sup>13</sup>

It is somewhat difficult to unpick the relationships between the society, the College Commissioners, W.H. Playfair and Trotter with regard to the Speculative's apartments. The Minutes of the Speculative Society Volume V do include an entry for the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 1816 that mentions a standing committee having viewed a plan by Playfair.<sup>14</sup> A later Minute, of the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 1818, mentions the appointment of a committee to '...attend to the interests of the Society respecting the apartments appropriated for them in the new buildings of the College...'<sup>15</sup> However, these committees appear to have kept separate minutes to those kept by the society as a whole, and these are no longer extant. The only information available from which to piece together the various working relationships is contained in the main Minute Book (Volume V) of the society, and the various College Commissioners' Minutes.

It seems likely that the exterior architecture and internal layout of the apartments was in the hands of the Commissioners, with some recourse to the Memorial of the society of March 1818. It appears that the society lobbied the Commissioners to make sure their requirements were met. For example, a College Commissioners' Minute of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 1818 states that a Memorial had been received from the society, requesting

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<sup>12</sup> The Speculative's old hall having been taken down in Summer 1817 (Anon, Op Cit, p.43.)

<sup>13</sup> E.C.A., College Commissioners' Minutes, 2/1-2/97, 1815-1818, 16 March 1818.

<sup>14</sup> Speculative Society, Minutes of the Speculative Society Volume V, 1815-1825, 17 Dec. 1816, p.57.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 13 Jan. 1818, p.105.



that their apartments be ready by the following winter '...they being in the greatest want of them.'<sup>16</sup>

With regard to the interior architecture and fittings of the apartments, the society may have been allowed more input, although the lack of specific committee minutes makes this impossible to determine for sure. What is clear is that Playfair provided for the Commissioners drawings and plans of the rooms which included such features as doorways and fireplaces (see Fig.s 1, 2 and 3). This would seem to suggest that it was the Commissioners who paid for this work, although specific Minutes / accounts regarding payments have not been found.

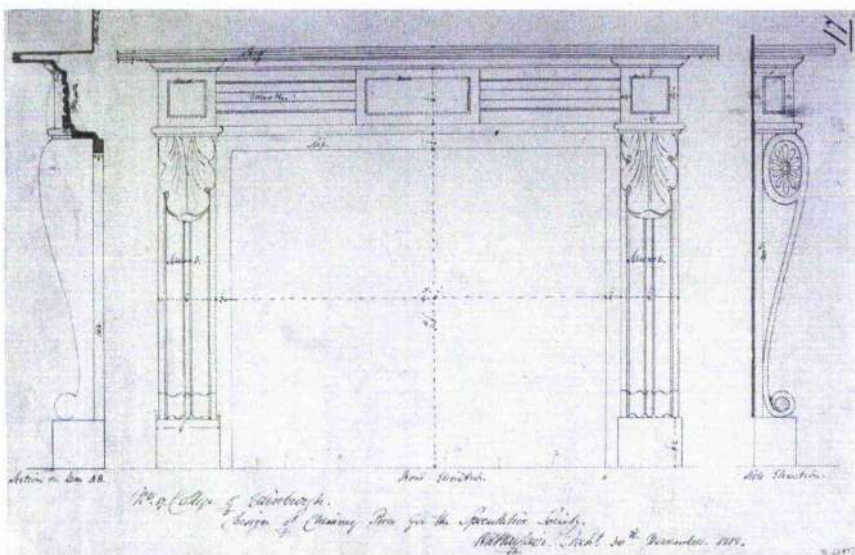


Fig.1: Working drawing of the interior architecture of the Speculative Society Rooms, the College of Edinburgh, by W.H. Playfair, c1816 (Edinburgh University Library (Special Collections), Catalogue of Architectural Drawings by W.H. Playfair, running no. 219).

<sup>16</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No.2, 1816-1828, 2 June 1818, p.142.



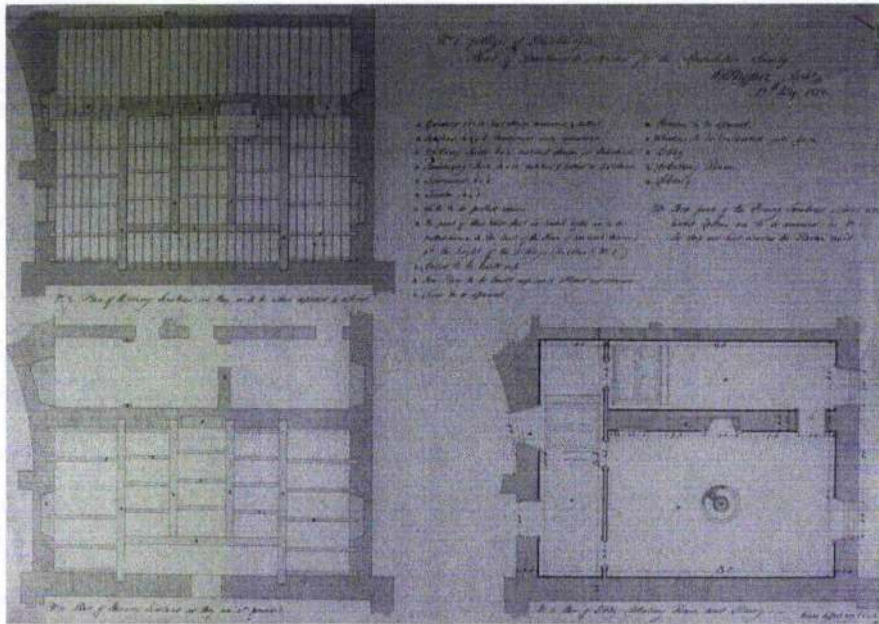


Fig.2: Plan of the Speculative Society Rooms, the College of Edinburgh, by W.H. Playfair, c1816 (Edinburgh University Library (Special Collections), Catalogue of Architectural Drawings by W.H. Playfair, running no. 203).

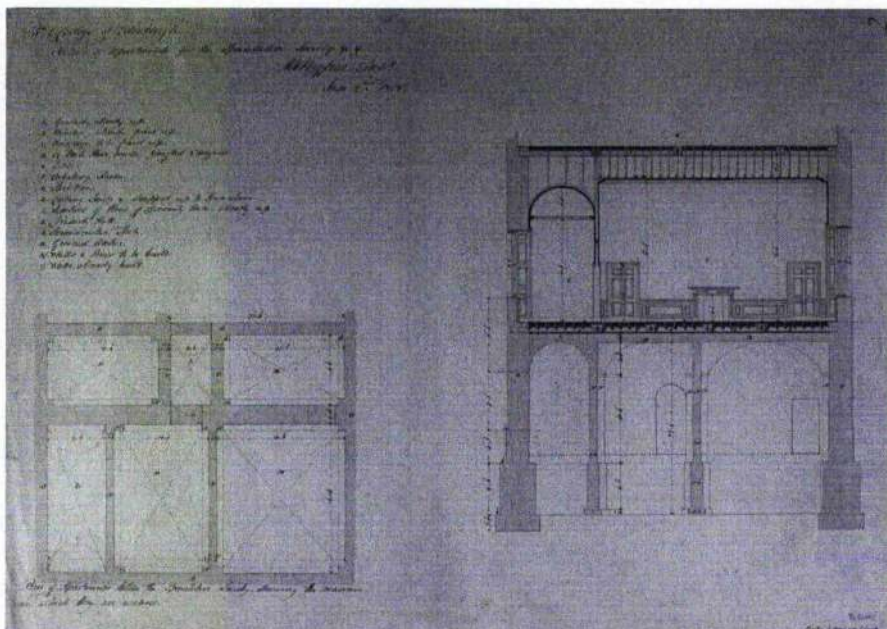


Fig.3: Section of the Speculative Society Rooms, the College of Edinburgh, by W.H. Playfair, c1816 (Edinburgh University Library (Special Collections), Catalogue of Architectural Drawings by W.H. Playfair, running no. 204).

A College Commissioners' Minute of the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1818 states that Playfair had reported as to the progress made on the society's rooms. The interior was advancing according to plan, the apartments having been fitted up by 'Lorimer and Inglis'.<sup>17</sup> It may be that this firm completed the interior architecture of the rooms, including the doorways and fireplaces shown on Playfair's plans. As it seems that the Commissioners paid for the interior architecture and there is no mention of Trotter in their Minutes, it seems unlikely that he was commissioned for this work.

The Minutes of the Speculative Society (Volume V) seem to suggest that the society themselves paid for the furnishing of their rooms (aside from the interior fittings). Unfortunately, the absence of any specific committee minutes regarding the furniture means that the reasons behind the choice of Trotter as cabinet-maker cannot be ascertained. The main Minutes, however, do provide some information about the furnishing. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 1818, the committee attending to the interests of the society with regard to the new rooms (discussed above) reported to the society that the rooms were not yet ready for their reception. However:

...with a view to have funds for furnishing them properly, the committee had taken upon themselves to issue a circular letter to the Members of the Society requesting a subscription for the purpose...<sup>18</sup>

Included in the Minutes is a copy of the circular sent to all members. In discussing the furniture, it is stated that 'We have reason to believe that the expense cannot be less

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<sup>17</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No.2, 1816-1828, 12 Dec. 1818, p.159.

<sup>18</sup> Speculative Society, Minutes of the Speculative Society, Volume V, 1815-1825, 17 Nov. 1818, p.147.

than £300'.<sup>19</sup> This suggests that an estimate had already been requested from Trotter (or perhaps a range of estimates from different cabinet-makers). Alternatively, it may be that Playfair advised the committee of the likely cost. The idea that Playfair had some hand in the matter of furnishing is supported by a Minute of the 24<sup>th</sup> of November 1818, when:

...the thanks of the Society were unanimously voted to Mr Playfair, architect, for his exertions with regard to finishing the new apartments.<sup>20</sup>

The new rooms were ready for the reception of the society on the 19<sup>th</sup> of January 1819.<sup>21</sup> An itemised account / bill for Trotter's furniture here is not extant. It is simply stated in a Minute of the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 1824 that he had been paid £270.<sup>22</sup> However, as the rooms remain largely unchanged from Trotter's time (see Fig. 4, a photograph from a *History of the Society*, produced in 1964), it can be asserted that he provided: a suite of upholstered bench seating with crane-neck arms which ran round the walls of the room; an upholstered chair with scroll arms for the President (see Fig.5); a writing table with a leather insert on hipped legs for the President; two chairs for the 'Office Bearers', labelled 'Secretary' and 'Librarian' on the backs in gold (see Fig.6) and a lectern with a hipped tripod base and candelabra. The 'Office Bearers'' writing table may also be by Trotter, despite being of a much plainer form than that of the President. Some furniture in the lobby and library rooms of the society's apartments may also be by him, but the re-arrangement of these rooms subsequent to the original fitting up makes confident attribution difficult. A table in

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.150.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 24 Nov. 1818, p.153.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 5 Jan. 1819, p.166.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 16 Nov. 1824, p.418.



the library is, however, similar to the ‘Office Bearers’ writing table in its form and the turning of its legs, while a low sofa now kept in the lobby appears to be roughly contemporary, although much simpler in style to the bulk of the furniture supplied.

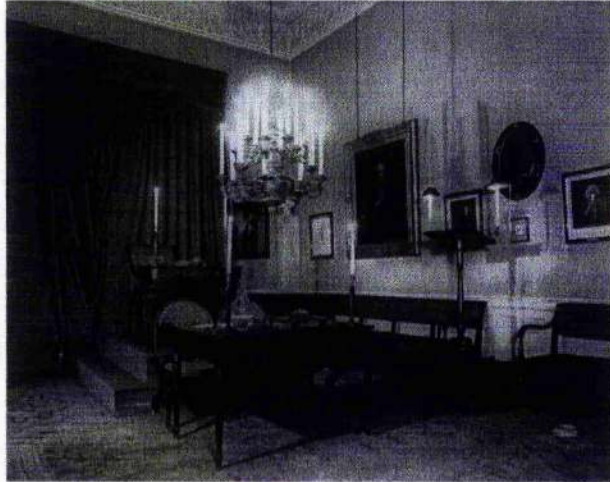


Fig.4: View of the Speculative Society Rooms as furnished by Trotter (photo dated 1964, featured in *The Scotsman*).



Fig.5: President's Chair from the Speculative Society Rooms, supplied by Trotter in 1818-1819 (photo: the author, by kind permission of the Speculative Society).



Fig.6: Librarian's Chair from the Speculative Society Rooms, supplied by Trotter in 1818-1819 (photo: the author, by kind permission of the Speculative Society).

It appears from the society's Minutes that after this initial sizable commission, Trotter was employed to undertake other work on a smaller scale in later years. In the society's bills, there is a reference to work completed by Trotter in 1820:

1820	July	Taking down a lustre for Painters	£ " 3 "
	Nov	Putting up Curtains & Laying Carpets	£ " 13 "
		Cleaning & repairing furniture, and	
		Hanging lustre	£ " 18 "
		A brafts nofsell for lustre	£ " 3 "
			£ 1 17 2 <sup>23</sup>

Francis Bamford, in his *A Dictionary of Edinburgh Wrights and Furniture Makers, 1660-1840*, also notes that Trotter's will mentions money owed by the society for

<sup>23</sup> Speculative Society, Speculative Society Bills, No. 25, July and Nov. 1820.

curtains, a valance and a tassel for a lustre, amounting to £8.7.0 (including three year's interest).<sup>24</sup>

Trotter's work at the Speculative Society completes the picture of his work at the College of Edinburgh. Undertaking a commission for such an illustrious society was also a further boost to his already established reputation. However, the most interesting aspect of this particular commission for the modern-day furniture historian is the fact that Trotter's work here remains largely untouched, with the furniture still in use for its original purpose.

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<sup>24</sup> Bamford, F., *A Dictionary of Edinburgh Wrights and Furniture Makers, 1660-1840*, Furniture History, 1983, p.121.

## **Chapter 7: Trotter's Other Work at the College**

It would be wrong to assume that Trotter's work at the Museum was his only area of involvement at the College. Although the Museum was his most lucrative and well-known contract within the College, he also worked extensively in almost every other section of the buildings. The scale of this work has not been recognised in the literature; Trotter's contribution to buildings other than the Museum are usually mentioned as an afterthought, and described as fairly limited in scope. The reality is rather different. Aside from the College Library block, there appears to be scarcely a room in the College which did not, at some point, receive work by Trotter. These other contracts should not be ignored, as they provide a wealth of information regarding the scope of Trotter's business, the nature of the furniture in the less public rooms of the College, and the workings of the Commissioners with regard to the issuing of contracts for the work.

Trotter's work at the College should be viewed in the context of University furniture more generally. A comparison of images of the Universities of Oxford and St Andrews with the extant information regarding Trotter's work at the College of Edinburgh suggests that he provided types of furniture seen at other Universities during the same period. The types of rooms featured in the images of Oxford and St Andrews also appear in connection with the College of Edinburgh as being furnished by Trotter. Fig.1 is a print of a lecture taking place in a classroom at Oxford in 1823. It can be seen that the range of furniture provided for the space included: bench seating; a chair with arms; steps for the speaker; a large desk / cabinet; a smaller desk / cabinet and various boards for the display of diagrams. Fig.2, a photograph of the Agriculture Classroom at St Andrews dating from the late nineteenth / early twentieth



century, includes a similar range of furniture, namely: a cabinet; a blackboard and screen; two desks / tables; a display case for slides / samples and a writing slide. The Estimates, Contracts and Accounts of the College of Edinburgh (especially Account Number 9 (see Appendix 1)), together with the Minute Books of the College Trust, outline the furniture provided by Trotter for classrooms. These are discussed in detail below, but it should be noted here that they include references to the provision of presses, cases, cabinets and chairs, along with soft furnishings such as curtains, blinds and carpeting.



Fig.1: Print of William Buckland lecturing at Oxford University in 1823 (from M.G. Brock & M.C. Curthoys (ed.s), *The History of the University of Oxford Vol. VI Nineteenth-Century Oxford, Part I*, Oxford, 1997, plate 32).

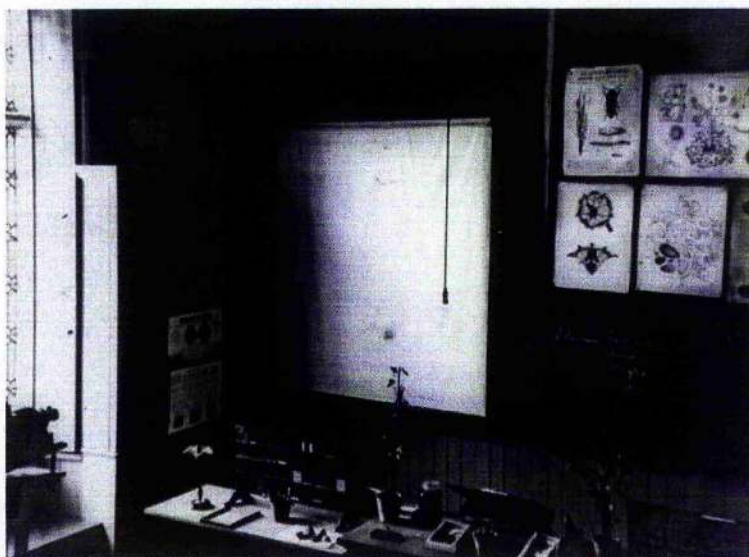


Fig.2: Photograph of the Agriculture Classroom of the University of St Andrews, late nineteenth / early twentieth century (photo: University of St Andrews Library (Special Collections), General Topographical Sequence, Vol. V).

Fig.3 is a watercolour of the President of Magdalen College, Oxford, in his study, dating from 1854. The furniture visible consists of: floor-to-ceiling bookcases; easy chairs; a splat back and one other chair, both with upholstered seats; two small, movable tables; a library table; a lectern and a foot rest. This range of furniture, together with the inclusion of paintings, a throw, a heavily patterned carpet and hearth-rug, with a caged bird on the windowsill, give the room the air of a domestic space, rather than a purely academic study. It is known from the sources mentioned above that Trotter provided furniture for the Edinburgh professors' 'retiring rooms'. Again, his commissions here are discussed in detail below, but they included Pembroke tables, among other pieces normally associated with the domestic environment. This suggests that it was common practice during the first half of the nineteenth century to furnish studies / retiring rooms in a way that created a comfortable environment for relaxation as well as work.



Trotter also provided furniture for more formal spaces within the College such as the Senate Rooms. It has proved difficult to find images of contemporary rooms of a similar nature in other Universities, due largely to the fact that College furniture (its style, type, etc.) has not been the subject of an in-depth study. This is certainly an area that would repay future research. With reference to the current study, it can merely be asserted that types of room furnished by Trotter, and the sorts of furniture provided, do seem to have precedents among other Universities.

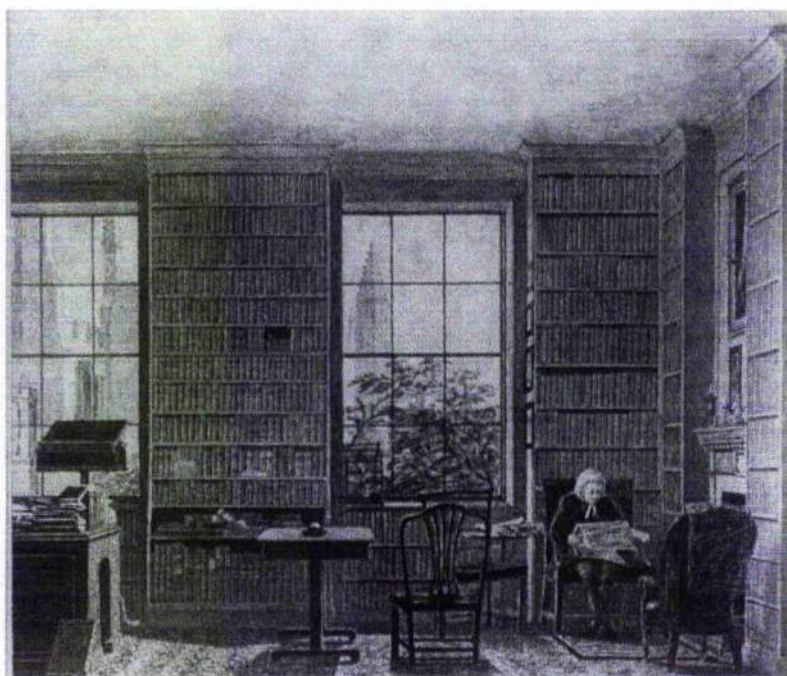


Fig.3: Watercolour by G. Pyne of Dr Routh, President of Magdalen College, Oxford University, in his study, 1854 (from Dacre Balsdon, *Oxford Life*, London, 1957, facing page 113).

Trotter's connection with the College, as has been seen in the chapter on the Museum, pre-dates the Playfair College project. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1809, the Town Council Minutes state that their Chamberlain had been authorised to pay sums to Trotter for fitting up the Museum for Dr Thomson's Collection and for work in

Professors Christison, Duncan and Hope's classes, the Guard Room and the Library. This work was completed in 1808, and amounted to £777.2.8 in total.<sup>1</sup> On the 6<sup>th</sup> of December 1809, an 'Estimate for work in the College Library by Mr William Trotter' was remitted to the Third Bailie's Committee.<sup>2</sup>

Not all cabinet-work within the College at this time was automatically entrusted to Trotter. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 1810, Trotter and a Mr Brown (one of the Council Deacons) were asked to give in sealed estimates to the Council for work required in the College Library.<sup>3</sup> On this occasion, it appears that Brown received the contract, as on the 4<sup>th</sup> July 1810, it was minuted that he had completed work in the College totalling £600.<sup>4</sup>

There are a few Town Council Minutes dating from the period after the commencement of Playfair's scheme which still refer to work carried out by Trotter at the College. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1820, a letter was read from the College Janitor, stating that various articles of furniture were required for the new classrooms and professors' retiring rooms. Estimates were ordered to be taken from Messrs Trotter, Lamb, Sandeman and Paton.<sup>5</sup> There is also a minute from the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1820, which refers to money due to Trotter for work at the College in 1818 and 1819 (the first totalling £41.9.7 and then second £26.4.9). These entries are confusing, as by this

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<sup>1</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 154, 29 March – 13 Oct. 1809, 13 Sept. 1809, p.357.

<sup>2</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 155, 25 Oct. 1809 – 2 May 1810, 6 Dec. 1809, p.138.

<sup>3</sup> E.C.A. SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 156, 9 May 1810– 12 Sept 1810, 13 June 1810, p.103.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 4 July 1810, p.174.

<sup>5</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 181, 28 June 1820 – 17 Jan 1821, 9 Aug. 1820, p.74. It is unclear which 'Lamb' is being referred to, as there were a number of wrights and upholsterers with this surname working during this period (see Bamford, F., *A Dictionary of Edinburgh Wrights and Furniture Makers, 1660-1840*, Furniture History, 1983, pp 78-79). 'Sandeman' is likely to be George Sandeman, a wright and upholsterer of Greenside Street, Edinburgh, who was entered as a Burgess in 1810 (Bamford, Op Cit, p.105). 'Paton' refers to David Paton, a wright who became a Burgess in 1794 (Bamford, Op Cit, p.94). He was an Extraordinary Deacon on the Town Council, receiving a large number of commissions from the Council.

point, such work should have been overseen by the College Commissioners. The blurred boundaries between the remits of the Commissioners and the Town Council may explain this anomaly. In later Town Council Minutes, there are no such references, which suggests that by that time, the boundaries had become more distinct.

The major extant source of information on Trotter's work in the College in general is Account Number 9 of the estimates, contracts and accounts of the College Commissioners, held by the Edinburgh City Archives. This account covers the period from December 1820 to November 1823. It was discussed in Chapter 5 with regard to the items listed in it for the Museum, but the bulk of the account is taken up with items provided for the professors' rooms and other areas of the College. It begins with items for Professor Leslie and Professor Brunton's classrooms. After a section covering Museum items, the account goes on to list work completed for:

- The Senate Room and the room off it
- The Guard Hall and the room off it
- Playfair's Office
- Professor Pillans' Room
- Professor Dunbar's Room
- Dr Ritchie's Room
- The Principal's Room and the room off it
- Dr Brunton's Room
- Professor Wilson's Room
- Dr Duncan's Room

- Dr Brown's Room
- Dr Home's Room
- Professor Leslie's Room
- Professor Irving's Room
- Professor Wallace's Room
- Dr Hope's Room
- A Lobby
- The Janitor's House

This bill is included as an appendix to this thesis (see Appendix 1), but it is worthwhile examining some of the items in detail.

The second entry in the account, dated July 1821, is for 'Preparing walls with size for papering in Professor Brunton's room' and includes 24 yards of satin ground paper and over 166 yards of border.<sup>6</sup> This indicates that Trotter's firm was, in some cases, entrusted not just with the production of furniture, curtains and carpets for rooms, but with the fitting out of the entire room.

An entry from December 1823 details:

A Window Cornice with turned ends painted black and scarlet with 2 polished iron rods Brackets & Window hooks also another Window Cornice to match

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<sup>6</sup> E.C.A., 3/38-3/57, Estimates, Contracts and Accounts (College), Account No.9, July 1821.

the above with Brackets Window Hooks and making 3 Window Curtains for Senate Room and room off Do. of your Scarlet Cloth.<sup>7</sup>

The reference to 'your' scarlet cloth is elucidated by the College Commissioners Minutes of the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 1823. The Standing Committee note that:

...since their Minute refusing to furnish curtains to the Senate Hall, part of the Hangings used in the Parliament House, on the occasion of the Banquet given to His Majesty had been procured on moderate terms, and that they had sanctioned the purchase for that purpose...<sup>8</sup>

These curtains were provided for Parliament House by Trotter himself. His work in Edinburgh for the visit of George IV is discussed in Chapter 10, but it is interesting to note the Commissioners keeping a tight hold on the purse strings in this instance and seeking out a bargain through Trotter's connections, even for a room as grand as the Senate Room.

Some of the furniture provided for the professors is rather grand, and more akin to domestic furniture than the kind necessary for a classroom. The account does not explain the exact destination of each piece, but it is known from the minutes and from Playfair's plans that each Professor was to have a classroom space and an additional private space known as a 'retiring room'. This room appears to have served the dual purpose of a study and a room for relaxation, especially important in view of the omission of houses for the professors from Playfair's plans for the College. This helps

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Dec. 1823.

<sup>8</sup> E.C.A., 2/1-2/97, College Commissioners' Minutes, 1815-1818, 9 May 1823.



to explain why Professor Pillans was allowed to have made 'A Mahogany deception Pembroke table'.<sup>9</sup> The 1805 *Edinburgh Cabinet-Makers' Book of Prices* includes the specifications of a 'Pembroke Deception Table':

Two feet three inches long, two feet eight inches wide when open, corners of the flaps octagon or round, one end to fold down, supported by a quadrant, one fly bracket on each side.<sup>10</sup>

According to the account, Professor Wallace and the Principal also received deception Pembroke tables.

There is an obvious distinction between the furniture provided for the professors and that made for the Principal of the College. His section of the account is worth quoting in full, in order to highlight the luxurious nature of the pieces:

A Mahogany Grecian Sofa high scrolled back and ends nicely stuf with bordered hair squab in hair seating welted with morocco & finished with silk gimp  
2 Down pillows in hair seating  
A Mahogany scroll back Easy Chair round stuf with bordered hair cushion in hair seating  
16 strong Mahogany chairs seats stuf in hair seating  
2 Elbow Do. to match

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<sup>9</sup> E.C.A., 3/38-3/57, Estimates, Contracts and Accounts (College), Account No.9, Nov. 1823.

<sup>10</sup> Jones, D., *The Edinburgh Cabinet and Chair Makers' Books of Prices 1805-1825*, Cupar, 2000, 1805 Cabinet-Maker's Book, p.61.

A handsome Mahogany writing table with 10 drawers a writing board in each centre drawer

A Mahogany writing table on stout pillar legs

A Mahogany dwarf Wardrobe with drawers in centre and bound panelled doors

A Mahogany Commode Basin stand with cupboard & drawer under<sup>11</sup>

A room off this room was to have a Pembroke table, six chairs and two elbow chairs.<sup>12</sup> It is possible to speculate on the uses of such rooms from the nature of the furniture provided. The room off the Principal's room seems, from the ratio of chairs to other furniture, and the provision of only one small table, to have been a waiting room. The office itself seems to have functioned as a study (due to the two writing tables), a meeting room (due to the large number of plain mahogany chairs), a relaxation room (due to the sofa and easy chair) and perhaps even a robing / dressing room (due to the wardrobe and basin stand).

A letter from Baron Clerk Rattray, whilst away on business, to the rest of the Standing Committee, mentions the furniture necessary for the Principal's rooms. He writes that '...there is already a grate – but it is proper to have 2 tables, 18 chairs, a floor cloth, and such other articles of that kind as you think necessary.'<sup>13</sup> This list of necessities sounds rather limited and austere, but no doubt the Principal (being one of the Commissioners) was allowed an input into his requirements, which were somewhat more extensive and luxurious than this minute suggests!

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<sup>11</sup> E.C.A., 3/38-3/57, Estimates, Contracts and Accounts (College), Account No.9, Nov. 1823.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No.2 1816-1828, 1 Nov. 1823, p.368.

As well as large, luxurious pieces, this account also includes the sundries necessary to finish the rooms, such as slip covers for furniture, brass stair rods, and so forth. The items provided for the Guard Hall, for example, include '2 Blue and White Chamber vases'.<sup>14</sup>

Even though Account Number 9 is a huge account, there are references elsewhere to furniture made for the rooms mentioned during the period covered by the account, which are not mentioned in the account itself. For example, the entry regarding the Guard Hall mentions furniture and floor coverings, repairing a chair, and providing chamber pots, in December 1823. A Standing Committee Minute of the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 1822 mentions articles to be furnished for the Guard Hall, being 'One Grey floor cloth, one Table either Mahogany or covered with black leather 9 feet by 4 ½ Two tables Do. 4 ½ ft by 4 ½ ft Twenty four chairs covered with hair cloth'.<sup>15</sup> It could be that this furniture was never actually provided, but it seems more likely that there was far more furniture supplied by Trotter than the extant accounts suggest.

Much of the furniture provided for the professors and the Principal seems likely, in its similarity to domestic furniture, to have either come from stock, or to have been made to stock designs. However, various minutes refer to furniture made by Trotter for classrooms that is similar in nature to that provided for the Museum. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 1824, the Commissioners minuted that estimates had been received from Trotter for cabinets for the Mathematical and Materia Medica classrooms.<sup>16</sup> Account Number 1, which mostly covers January 1826, mentions a large press, a long glass

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<sup>14</sup> E.C.A., 3/38-3/57, Estimates, Contracts and Accounts (College), Account No.9, Dec. 1823.

<sup>15</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No.2 1816-1828, 12 Aug. 1822, p.298.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 23 Dec. 1824, p.443.

case, two oak cases and two tables with two drawers and pillar legs, for the Materia Medica classroom.<sup>17</sup>

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1826, the Standing Committee noted that 'The Estimates for fitting up the Herbarium for the Botany Clafs' had been offered.<sup>18</sup> Here, Trotter was not just given the contract, due to his experience with this kind of work, but instead had to submit a sealed estimate in competition with A.O. Turnbull. It is unclear whether this was intended by the Commissioners to keep prices down by introducing an element of competition, or whether it was a step taken in order to be seen to be adhering to the principles established by the Commissioners at the start of the project (see Chapter 5). Whatever their motives, it was a principle that seems to have been applied only in some instances (see, for example, the fitting up of the Secretary's apartments below).

Turnbull's estimate was £130, while Trotter's was £87.10. if made of deal or £108 if the drawers and trays were to be wainscot. Trotter's offer was accepted. Account Number 1 describes the item as:

A large cabinet in six parts with 2 bound panelled doors in each of the centre parts one door enclosing each wing one half filled up with 180 wainscot drawers and 153 sliding trays in the other.<sup>19</sup>

Many such pieces were made for the Museum, but none with so many individual drawers and trays.

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<sup>17</sup> E.C.A., 3/38-3/57, Estimates, Contracts and Accounts (College), Account No.1, Jan. 1826.

<sup>18</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No.2 1816-1828, 1 March 1826, p.458.

<sup>19</sup> E.C.A., 3/38-3/57, Estimates, Contracts and Accounts (College), Account No.1, Jan. 1826.

The Standing Committee Minute of the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1826 is somewhat intriguing. It is minuted that:

Mr Playfair having stated that it was more in Mr Trotter's way to give plans of furniture for the Entrance Lobby of the Principal's Chambers and Senate Hall, he had as ordered some time ago procured these – a sketch of seats and a table were submitted and approved of, - one large seat to be placed on each side the door, and one small seat on each side the stove – Table (all made simply of oak) to stand against the South Wall.<sup>20</sup>

This minute would seem to suggest that Trotter himself designed this furniture (see Fig.4). The plans for Trotter's work at the Museum, so far as they are extant, were produced by Playfair, who seems to have maintained a tight grip on the designs of the whole College project. This minute suggests that either this lobby furniture was a rare case of Playfair letting Trotter design pieces by himself, or alternatively that a number of pieces for the College may have been designed by Trotter, including the non-fixed pieces for the Museum. This would explain the lack of Playfair drawings for such pieces in his Portfolios. Due to a lack of extant drawings from the Trotter workshop, it is impossible to settle this matter, but it is a tantalising thought that Trotter did not just work to Playfair's designs or provide stock pieces, but may have designed pieces for the College himself. Stylistically, the pieces can be linked to a design by J.C. Loudon (see Fig.5), published in his *Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture and Furniture*, published in 1839 (the original edition being published in 1833). The

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<sup>20</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No.2, 20 July 1826, p.482.



use of turned cylindrical handrails above bulbous ‘tulip’ uprights, tapering turned legs and stump feet, and a blocked section around the seat, are visible in both the Trotter pieces and Loudon’s design. Trotter’s version, however, appears to be rather more abstracted and pared down than Loudon’s, which features turning of a more exuberant nature. This may point towards the influence, if not the authorship, of Playfair. It is also interesting to note the fact that no other estimates or designs were taken in for the lobby furniture. Playfair took it upon himself to procure designs from Trotter before speaking to the Commissioners about the matter, and Trotter was accepted by all as the man for the job.



Fig.4: One of the seats made by Trotter for the Senate Hall / Principal’s Chamber lobby of the College of Edinburgh in 1826 (from A.G. Fraser, *The Building of Old College: Adam, Playfair & the University of Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1989 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), fig. 7.28).

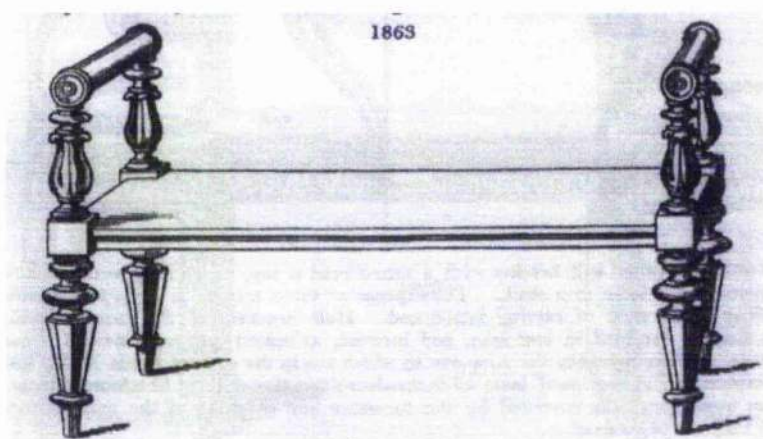


Fig.5: Design for a bench by J.C. Loudon (from Loudon Furniture Designs from the Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farmhouse and Villa Architecture and Furniture 1839, published for Connoisseur, Yorkshire, 1970, p.71 (p.1041 in the original encyclopaedia)).

Sadly, it seems that the Trotter lobby furniture was not always cared for as well as might have been expected. A Standing Committee Minute of the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 1830 directs the clerk to write to Dr Brunton, the librarian, regarding the state of the furniture. Apparently, it had been in a bad state the previous autumn, when 'Mr Trotter was employed at considerable expense to put it into proper condition'.<sup>21</sup> It had returned to this bad state again, and:

...it appears from the report of Mr Trotter's Overseer, that all that is required to keep the furniture in order for an age is mere dusting with a clean brush – in place of which it seems to have been rubbed with bad oil, or washed with dirty water.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No.3 1828-1834, 8 April 1830, p.78.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.



The arrival of the Royal Commission for Visiting the Universities of Scotland provided further opportunities for Trotter to receive contracts for work at the College. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 1826, the College Commissioners received a letter from Mr Aitken, clerk to the Royal Commission, stating that:

Some of the Commissioners finding it unpleasant from the state of their eyes to sit at the table opposite the windows have expressed a wish to have the circumstance stated to you, with the view of your ordering blinds for the two windows of the large room...<sup>23</sup>

Again, the work was handed to Trotter without any other estimates being procured. The situation was the same when the Royal Commissioners complained about a draughty door entering from the stair head into the room where they met. Trotter was immediately asked to provide cloth for the door. However, in this instance Turnbull was to provide the necessary wood.<sup>24</sup>

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 1828, the Clerk of the College Commissioners was authorised to pay two accounts transmitted by the Royal Commissioners, one of which was to Trotter for 'screens', costing £8.13.<sup>25</sup> Account Number 12 explains that these screens were:

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<sup>23</sup> E.C.A., 2/166-2/226, College Commissioners' Minutes 1824-1829, 28 Oct. 1826.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 27 Oct. 1826.

<sup>25</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No.3 1828-1834, 11 Feb. 1828, p.9.

A Mahogany cheval firescreen with sliding...(indecipherable)...Mahogany 2 leaved screen covered with green cloth, 4-leaved screen covered with searlee.<sup>26</sup>

Even right at the end of Trotter's life, he was still receiving contracts from the College Commissioners. A Standing Committee Minute of the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 1833 includes a letter from Mr Gordon, the College Secretary, who required a number of pieces of furniture for his three small apartments. He requested:

- A small counter with a railing
- Two grates
- A small fireplace
- Fire irons
- Two carpets
- Eleven chairs
- A desk
- A press for records
- A small table<sup>27</sup>

Playfair was authorised to procure all the above items from Trotter, without taking in estimates.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> E.C.A., 3/38-3/57, Estimates, Contracts and Accounts (College), Account No.12, Dec. 1826 (work done).

<sup>27</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No.3, 1828-1834, 12 July 1833, p.229.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

From the estimates, accounts and minutes discussed above, it can be seen that Trotter's work at the College extended far beyond his work at the Museum. Perhaps most importantly, his work for the Senate Hall Lobby suggests that he may have been specifically commissioned not just to make pieces for the College, but also to design them. The only pieces of Trotter furniture known to remain in the College buildings are the lobby seats, the other furniture having been dispersed during subsequent alterations to the buildings. The extant written sources are therefore the only means of exploring the extent and nature of this important commission.

## **Chapter 8: Trotter's Other Work for the Council**

In addition to the large-scale, high profile commissions completed by Trotter for the Edinburgh Town Council, the records indicate that he completed a large number of smaller commissions in City institutions throughout his working life. This work can be divided into four categories. Firstly, there is the work completed for the buildings of the Council themselves. Secondly, there is that undertaken for various secular public buildings around the City. Thirdly, there a number of references to Trotter receiving commissions for the City's churches. And lastly, there are the public funerals organised by the Council. These commissions as a whole help to illustrate the scope of Trotter's work in Edinburgh, and, through their volume, indicate the success of the family business under his leadership.

A Town Council Minute of the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1810 states that the Chamberlain was authorised to pay 'To William Trotter for furnishings to the Chamberlain's Office in September 1809, £4.8'<sup>1</sup> This use of Trotter as the cabinet-maker of choice for work in the Council offices continued until as late in his career as 1826. The Minutes include four pieces of work carried out by Trotter for the City Chambers, in 1816, 1817, 1820 and 1826. Three of these Minutes are rather vague in their description of the work completed, stating simply that 'work' or 'furniture' had been provided. The Minute regarding work completed in 1820, however, states that Trotter was to be paid for '...a carpet for the City Chamber'.<sup>2</sup> The money paid to him for these various commissions ranged from just over £1 to £81.19.11 in 1826.<sup>3</sup> This suggests that the

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<sup>1</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 156, 9 May 1810-12 Sept. 1810, 12 Sept. 1810, p.409.

<sup>2</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 188, 17 Sept. 1823-4 Feb. 1824, 7 Jan. 1824, pp 322-323.

<sup>3</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 202, 29 Aug. 1827-13 Feb. 1828, 16 Jan. 1828, p.374.

nature of the work varied from minor repairs to much larger commissions such as suites of furniture.

Other Council offices that Trotter worked in included the Council Room, for which he provided a mahogany armchair in December 1825,<sup>4</sup> the Procurator Fiscal's Office, the Session-Clerk's Office, and the Council Chamber, which received a new floor cloth from him in 1826.<sup>5</sup>

A Minute of the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 1820 refers to work done for the Council not specific to a particular location. The Chamberlain was authorised to pay Trotter £6.6.9 for boxes he had made in 1819 '...to carry Council Records to London'.<sup>6</sup>

Aside from the Council offices, Trotter carried out work in a number of Edinburgh's other public buildings. In 1808, Trotter was paid £16.6 for work in the Corn Sample Market.<sup>7</sup> The following year, he undertook work at the Canongate Jail. A letter in the Exchequer Papers (kept in the National Archives) of the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1829 from an Adam Longmore Junr to Robert Reid (Master of Works at this time), mentions the fact that an account is due to Trotter which includes '...furnishings &c in the Court of Session...'.<sup>8</sup> According to the Town Council Minutes, Trotter also provided furniture for the Leith Courtroom, the work being carried out in 1826.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 200, 6 Dec. 1826-4 April 1827, 3 Jan. 1827, p.75.

<sup>5</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 202, 29 Aug. 1827-13 Feb. 1828, 16 Jan. 1828, p.374.

<sup>6</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 180, 19 Jan. 1820-21 June 1820, 15 March 1820, p.186.

<sup>7</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 154, 29 March 1809-12 Oct. 1809, 13 Sept. 1809, p.357.

<sup>8</sup> National Archives, E342 (1), Exchequer No. 1, p.113

<sup>9</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 202, 29 Aug. 1827-13 Feb. 1828, 16 Jan. 1828, p.374.

Another building in which Trotter supposedly worked is Register House. The foundation stone of this grand receptacle of the City records was begun in 1774, with work grinding to a halt in 1778. After years spent being called 'the most magnificent pigeon house in Europe', due to its unfinished state, the building entered a new phase of construction in 1820.<sup>10</sup> Sebastian Pryke, in his article 'At the Sign of the Pelican', suggests that Trotter was commissioned to provide the furniture for the building.<sup>11</sup> Francis Bamford includes a plate of a form '...from a larger set probably made by William Trotter about 1820 for Register House' in his *A Dictionary of Edinburgh Wrights and Furniture Makers, 1660-1840*.<sup>12</sup> There is an absence of references to such a commission in the Town Council Minutes. It may be, however, that a separate committee was established by the Council for the purposes of overseeing the work on Register House. The minutes of such a committee would not be included in the volumes of Town Council Minutes. The minutes of a specific committee on the new building have not, however, been found.

There are 14 references in the Town Council Minutes to work carried out by Trotter in specific City churches, and five references to work carried out in the churches in general. There are five references to St George's Church, three to St Andrew's Church, two to St Mary's Church, and one entry each for Bellevue Church, Old Greyfriar's Church, New Greyfriar's Church and the High Church. The amounts referred to range from about £5 to £179.19 (owed to Trotter for '...work at the

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<sup>10</sup> Youngson, A.J., *The Making of Classical Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1966, p.66.

<sup>11</sup> Pryke, S., 'At the Sign of the Pelican', *Regional Furniture*, vol. VI, 1992, pp 10-21, p.13.

<sup>12</sup> Bamford, F., *A Dictionary of Edinburgh Wrights and Furniture Makers, 1660-1840*, *Furniture History*, 1983, plate 77b.

churches in 1818-19')<sup>13</sup> The work spans the period from 1805 to 1827. This suggests that Trotter derived a steady income from work in the Churches throughout his career.

As with the other work carried out for the Council, the nature of the work is not always described in the Minutes. However, some entries are more precise. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of January 1807, Trotter was authorised to '...furnish a cushion for the elders seat in Old Greyfriar's Church, similar to those in other Churches of the City.'<sup>14</sup> A minute of the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1824 includes an estimate from Trotter for providing upholstery work for Bellevue Church '...in the best manner agreeably to the samples of velvet, cloths, &c produced by you (probably the Church Elders), all to your satisfaction, for the sum of £112.10/stg'.<sup>15</sup>

Although Trotter appears from the minutes to have received a large number of commissions, he was not always automatically chosen as the cabinet-maker for church jobs. A letter in the Exchequer Papers of the National Archives from William Burn (then Provost) to Sir Henry Jardine (the King's Remembrancer), dated the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 1832, illustrates this. The letter discusses the estimates given in for completing the Assembly Aisle of St Giles' Church. Trotter's estimate is £2669.9.5.<sup>16</sup> However, other cheaper estimates had been handed in, and Trotter's estimate was therefore not accepted.

The final area of Council work with which Trotter was involved is that of public funerals. A Town Council Minute of the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1810 states that the

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<sup>13</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 181, 28 June 1820-17 Jan. 1821, 12 Sept. 1820, p.167.

<sup>14</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 148, Jan. 1807-13 May 1807, 21 Jan. 1807, pp 49-50.

<sup>15</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 191, 8 Dec. 1824-9 March 1825, 8 Dec. 1824, p.13.

<sup>16</sup> National Archives, E342 (1), Exchequer No.1, p.329.



Chamberlain was authorised to pay 'To Mr William Trotter being the expense of the late Lord Provost's funeral on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April last £354.3.7' (the recently departed Provost being William Coulter).<sup>17</sup> Other tradesmen are mentioned as receiving payment in connection with this event, such as a 'William Clerihugh', who was paid £4.4 for '...furnishings at the funeral of the late Lord Provost...'<sup>18</sup> However, Trotter's is by far the largest sum, suggesting that it was he who had co-ordinated the event and provided the bulk of the necessities.

In the same Minute as the above, the Chamberlain was also authorised to pay 'To Mr William Trotter as the expence of the Funeral of Dr Adam late Rector of the High School on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 1809 £54.12.11'.<sup>19</sup> A letter in the Dickson Autographs (held by the National Library of Scotland) provides further information about the event. It is addressed to Trotter and sent by Dugald Stewart (who retired that year from the College of Edinburgh, where he had been Professor of Moral Philosophy, whilst also lecturing on mathematics, astronomy and political economy), and was sent in December 1809.<sup>20</sup> Stewart explains that, due to ill health, he would be unable to join the funeral procession in bad weather. Adam's wife had requested that he perform this task, and he expresses his regret that he cannot perform '...the last duty to one of my oldest and most valued friends.'<sup>21</sup>

Stewart suggests a number of people that Trotter, obviously the coordinator of the event, could contact in order to obtain a sketch of the deceased's character. The men suggested are: Allan Mconochie (Lord Meadowbank), Alexander Fraser Tytler (Lord

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<sup>17</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 156, 9 May 1810-12 Sept. 1810, 12 Sept. 1810, p.408.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.413.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.409.

<sup>20</sup> Lee, S. (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. LIV, London, 1898, pp 282-285.

<sup>21</sup> N.L.S., MS9657, Dickson Autographs, f. 61, Dugald Stewart to William Trotter, Dec. 1809.

Woodhouselee), John Playfair, Francis Jeffrey and Francis Horner. Stewart was an eminent scholar whose memory was honoured by a monument on Calton Hill.<sup>22</sup> Lord Meadowbank was a prominent Scottish Judge and one of the founders of the Speculative Society (see Chapter 6).<sup>23</sup> Lord Woodhouselee was an Advocate who also taught at the University and contributed to the Edinburgh periodicals.<sup>24</sup> Playfair was a well-respected scholar credited with the creation of the science of Geology, and was one of the original members of the Royal Society.<sup>25</sup> Jeffrey was an Advocate and editor of the highly successful *Edinburgh Review*<sup>26</sup>, while Horner, a politician, became a leading member of the Speculative Society.<sup>27</sup> Through work such as this public funeral, Trotter was obviously in contact with some of the major figures of Edinburgh society.

As with Trotter's work at the College, there appear to be some commissions carried out 'for the Council' which were unsanctioned by the Council itself. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1820, the 1<sup>st</sup> Bailie's Committee reported that work amounting to £545.7.10 (carried out at St George's Church, other churches (not named), the College, and the City Chambers) had been carried out by Trotter. Of these, 'very few' of the articles had been supplied in accordance with the rules regulating the giving of commissions.<sup>28</sup> Trotter had apparently explained the way in which the articles had been ordered, so far as he could recollect, and the Chamberlain therefore authorised payment. However:

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<sup>22</sup> Lee, S. (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. LIV, London, 1898, pp 282-285.

<sup>23</sup> Lee, S. (ed.), *D.N.B.*, vol. XXXV, London, 1898, pp 256-257.

<sup>24</sup> Lee, S. (ed.), *D.N.B.*, vol. LVII, London, 1899, pp 450-451.

<sup>25</sup> Lee, S. (ed.), *D.N.B.*, vol. XLV, London, 1896, pp 413-415.

<sup>26</sup> Lee, S. (ed.), *D.N.B.*, vol. XXIX, London, 1892, pp 269-275.

<sup>27</sup> Lee, S. (ed.), *D.N.B.*, vol. XXVII, London, 1891, pp 368-370.

<sup>28</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 181, 28 June 1820-17 Jan. 1821, 12 Sept. 1820, p.167.

...the Committee consider(ed) it their duty to state, that should Mr Trotter again present accounts for articles furnished, without having been previously ordered by, or reported to, the Council, they ought not to be paid...<sup>29</sup>

Trotter's work for the Town Council, it can be seen from the sources quoted above, was far more wide-ranging than simply the completion of a few high-profile commissions. There was scarcely a public building in the New Town in which he did not, at some point, carry out work. This work, spread as it was throughout his career, must have proved rather lucrative. It also provided the opportunity for him to make contact with important players in Edinburgh Society. In the context of a social and political system where friendships and alliances stood in place of democracy, such opportunities had to be grasped in order to be successful, both in business and in public life.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.169.

## Chapter 9: Trotter at the George Street Assembly Rooms

Before the advent of Assembly Rooms in Edinburgh, the ladies of the City frequented Oyster Cellars for the purposes of socialising.<sup>1</sup> In c1710, the Old Assembly Room at the West Bow opened, providing a more salubrious and spacious venue for eating, dancing and mingling.<sup>2</sup> In 1723, a new Assembly was established in what became known as Old Assembly Close.<sup>3</sup> These early Assemblies were private enterprises, but in 1746 the Assembly was reconstituted. It now had the dual purpose of entertaining the rich and raising money for the poor.<sup>4</sup> In 1746-7, for example, over £6000 was raised for charitable purposes.<sup>5</sup> Under this new arrangement, the Assemblies became more exclusive and formal, and were presided over by Lady Directresses from the best Scottish families.<sup>6</sup>

1777 saw a new Assembly appear in Buccleuch Street, in proximity to the new and fashionable Southern Districts of the City.<sup>7</sup> This Assembly moved to the George Square Assembly Rooms in Buccleuch Place in 1783-4.<sup>8</sup> The decision was taken in the early 1780s to erect a large new Assembly Room in George Street, at the heart of the New Town. Built by public subscription, its foundation stone was laid in 1783.<sup>9</sup> Stark, in his *Picture of Edinburgh* of 1825, describes the finished Rooms, opened in 1787, thus:

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<sup>1</sup> Youngson, A.J., *The Making of Classical Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1966, p.248.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Stark, *Picture of Edinburgh*, Edinburgh 1825, p.275.

The external appearance of the building is by no means striking; but the elegant accommodation within makes ample compensation for any defects of outward appearance.<sup>10</sup>

Stark's reservations regarding the exterior of the building appear to have been shared by the rest of the inhabitants of the New Town, and 1818 saw a portico added to its front, supported by four Doric columns, to give it '...a more attractive appearance than it formerly exhibited'.<sup>11</sup> Fig. 1 shows the façade of the Rooms, facing George Street.

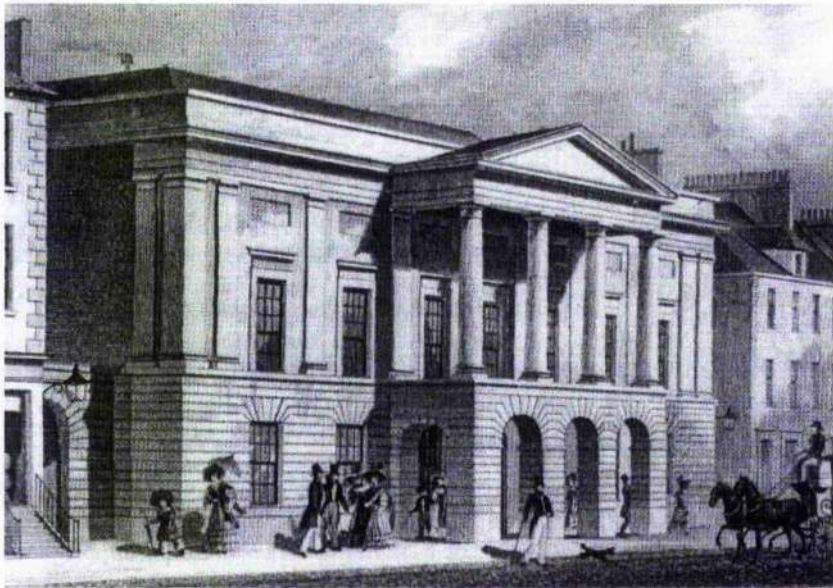


Fig.1: A Thomas Shepherd print of the Assembly Rooms, George Street, post-1818 (from A.J. Youngson, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh, 1750-1840*, Edinburgh, 1966, plate 73).

As well as a venue for eating, dancing and mingling, the Assembly Rooms were also used for concerts and public meetings. A versatile space such as this necessitated a

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.276.

range of furniture and decoration, and this is where Trotter stepped in. The Minute Book and Accounts of the Assembly Rooms, now held in the National Archives, show Trotter being given a range of commissions, from small repairs and cleaning, to large suites of furniture. In date, these commissions range from 1805 to 1824, a considerable proportion of his working life. There may have been many more commissions than this, as the Assembly Rooms' sources are somewhat fragmentary. Much of the information comes from the 'Miscellaneous Accounts', loosely bundled and disorganised collections of accounts which were obviously not systematically stored. The Minute Book of the Directors shows a similar lack of coherence. The work discussed below should therefore not be seen as an exhaustive account of Trotter's involvement with the Assembly Rooms.

The earliest mention of work completed by Trotter for the Assembly Rooms is in a Miscellaneous Account noted as having been paid in April 1806. The work referred to was apparently carried out between January and May 1805. The work consisted mainly of taking down and repairing / re-dying curtains, repairing furniture, and gilding ('Eagles' and 'Lions' are mentioned, but it is unclear what sort of furniture they constitute / are part of).<sup>12</sup> The work of this nature that was necessary must have been quite extensive, as Trotter was paid £377.8.9.<sup>13</sup>

July 1808 saw Trotter being paid £28.2.7 for work carried out in 1807. As above, much of the work involved cleaning and repairs. However, amongst such work there are two references to the provision of new items:

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<sup>12</sup> National Archives, GD1/377/42, Assembly Rooms, George Street, Accounts, Miscellaneous Accounts, 2 April 1806.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



2 Mahogany 2 leaved firescreens 2 part pannells in each leaf coverd with  
green Durant 3 17 “

and:

Making curtains of Crimson Moreen for front of Orchestra in small ballroom  
0 5 3<sup>14</sup>

Trotter's receipt for the work is bundled in with this account.

In July 1812, Trotter was paid £190.11 for work carried out between 1808 and 1810.

The commission included:

- Crimson Moreen curtains for the Orchestra, the Ballroom
- Re-stuffing and repairing various seat furniture
- A large hardwood table in two parts with a shelf underneath for standing in the middle of the kitchen
- Three further hardwood tables
- Making slips for seat furniture
- Repairing and cleaning furniture and curtains.<sup>15</sup>

This account seems to indicate a progression from the earliest work of repairs and cleaning to more substantial work, with Trotter actually producing furniture, slips and

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 29 July 1808. Durant was a variety of Tammy, a fine woollen / wool and cotton fabric, frequently with a glazed finish. (Gilbert, C., *The Life and Work of Thomas Chippendale*, vol.I, London, 1978, appendix: list of materials used by Chippendale).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 22 July 1812.

curtains. It is also interesting to note that he provided furniture not just for the elegant public rooms of the building, the third item on the above list being a table destined for the kitchen.

In January 1816, Trotter was paid for work for the Assembly Rooms totalling £509.3. The Account lists a great deal of repair and cleaning work, as well as a considerable amount of more substantial work. For example, in January 1815, he provided:

Ten large & elegant window curtains for the Ball room and large Tea Room.  
Made of superfine ... (word obscured) & blue coloured Moreen, to draw up in festoon, with full and handsome draperies over them, all bound with lace, and finished with rich gold color deep fringe & large tofsells with thick twisted rope connecting the draperies and the pilasters. – Altering the projection of chimney pieces in both rooms, and furnishing new copings, making large, handsome moulded door copes, supported on trufses with pilasters and... (word obscured) for side doors of large room, and covering the four double doors of entrance with scarlet cloth, & brafs nails, All agreeable to estimate

380 “ “

Forming the room into pannells with large projecting mafsive mouldings

16 10 6

2 reeded pilasters for the space in each side of the orchestra

1 10 “16

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 25 Jan. 1816.

The detailed description of the curtains for the ballroom and large tearoom show the level of elegance to which the Assembly Rooms were decorated. In addition to this work on the soft furnishings of the rooms, there also appears in this account a large amount of work on the interior architecture. Altering chimneypieces and furnishing new copes, trusses and pilasters are all mentioned.

Also included in the January 1816 Account was work carried out in May 1815. This included:

Two large framed porches with 2 doors in each in the entrance to Saloon at the top of stairs, all covered outside and inside with scarlet cloth, panelled with brafts nails, canvassed and papered, and glazed with crown glafs 69 “ “

Opening and recovering 9 forms with superfine scarlet moreen, finished with tape and brafts nails 6 10 6.<sup>17</sup>

The Assembly Room Accounts for 1822 include a memorandum of accounts due. There are two references to Trotter. Firstly, there is an account due of £38.17 for:

Repairing the stuffing and new covering with fine brown linen 32 sofas of different sizes 23 Benches and 40 stuffed back and seat Chairs.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> National Archives, GD1/377/42, Assembly Rooms, George Street, Accounts, 1822 Accounts.

This Account helps to illustrate the scale of the Assembly Rooms and the number of people that could be expected to attend it events.

Secondly, there is an Account for repairs carried out on the seat furniture amounting to £9.4.8. The greatest portion of this is for:

Workmanship taking down perches at head of stair cleaning and fitting up and repairing chairs, sofas and stages.<sup>19</sup>

There are also a number of entries listing articles such as screws, iron plates, hinges etc. that have been used to carry out the work. There is even a reference to 'Brushing Window Curtains', which was charged at £1.13.4.<sup>20</sup> It appears here, as at the College, that no job was too small for Trotter, and that everything had its price.

There are three references, one in the Miscellaneous Accounts and two in the Minute Book, to amounts paid to / to be paid to Trotter that do not include explanations of what had been provided. A memorandum of the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 1823 in the minute Book states that £338.4.9 is due to Trotter.<sup>21</sup> In the same source, the Minute of the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 1824 mentions that £200 is due to him.<sup>22</sup> An 1811 receipt from Trotter in the Miscellaneous Accounts is for £150.<sup>23</sup> The size of the payments due / received implies work on a large scale, which reinforces the view stated above that the extant records reveal only a part of Trotter's work at the Assembly Rooms.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> National Archives, GD1/377/6, Minute Book, Assembly Rooms, George Street, 1817, 5 June 1823.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 19 May 1824.

<sup>23</sup> National Archives, GD1/377/42, Assembly Rooms, George Street, Accounts, Miscellaneous Accounts, 1811.

Trotter's work at the George Street Assembly Rooms can be seen as representative of Assembly Room decoration more widely. Fig.2 shows a view of the Ballroom of the New Assembly Rooms at Bath, completed in Autumn 1771. Although gutted by fire in the German Raids of April 1942, the rooms were later restored, including the reinstatement of the furniture and chandeliers, which had been removed before the fire.<sup>24</sup> It can be seen that much of the decorative effect of the room is achieved through the embellishment of the interior wall surfaces and ceiling, complemented by ostentatious chandeliers. The furniture is limited to a suite of chairs disposed around the edges of the room. Such an arrangement left the maximum amount of floor space for dancing. Trotter's accounts indicate that a similar arrangement must have prevailed at the George Street Assembly Rooms. For example, the work carried out in January 1815, quoted above, included the provision of elaborate window curtains with festoons and draperies, lace and 'tofsells', for the ballroom and tearoom, indicating that the air of grandeur was created through the decoration of the wall area.<sup>25</sup> This is supported by the large amount of work on the interior architecture included in this bill. Altering chimneypieces, providing new coping and pilasters etc. are listed.<sup>26</sup>

The large number of chairs visible in Fig.2 is echoed by an account of 1822 for the George Street Rooms. £38.17 was due to Trotter for:

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<sup>24</sup> Ison, W., *The Georgian Buildings of Bath from 1700 to 1830*, Bath, 1969 (original edition 1948), p.52.

<sup>25</sup> National Archives, GD1/377/42, Assembly Rooms, George Street, Accounts, Miscellaneous Accounts, 25 Jan. 1816.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

Repairing the stuffing and new covering with fine brown linen 32 sofas of different sizes 23 Benches and 40 stuffed back and seat Chairs.<sup>27</sup>

In terms of actual furniture, as opposed to items such as curtains and fireplaces, the focus of Trotter's work was seat furniture, either the provision of new pieces or the maintenance of old. Other furniture provided was limited to two fire screens in 1807, four hardwood tables between 1808 and 1810, and two porches in 1815. The absence of furniture other than seat furniture in the view of the Bath Rooms suggests that the range of furniture required by the George Street Rooms was similarly limited, rather than that the fragmentary accounts retained by the George Street Rooms are lacking accounts relating to other sorts of furniture.

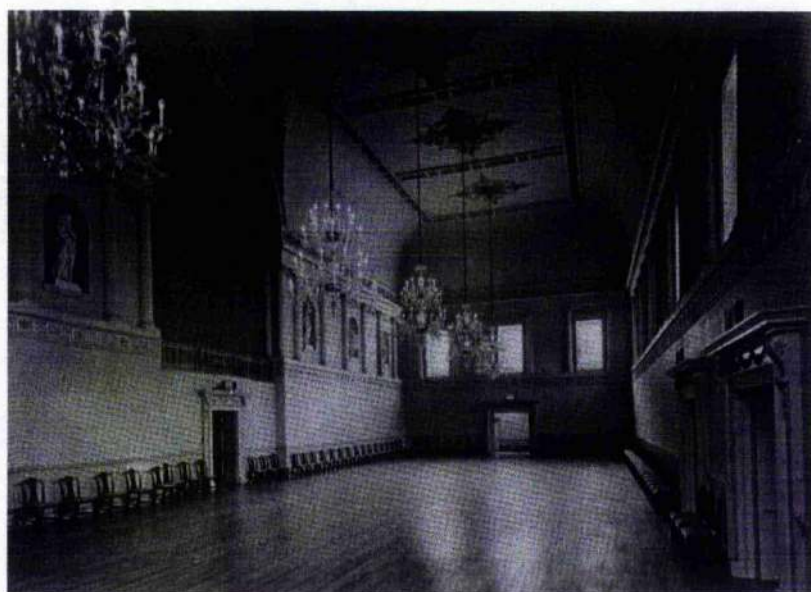


Fig.2: Photograph of the ballroom at the New Assembly Rooms, Bath, built 1769-1771 (from Walter Ison, *The Georgian Buildings of Bath from 1700 to 1830*, Bath, 1969 (original edition 1948), plate 11).

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<sup>27</sup> National Archives, GD1/377/42, Assembly Rooms, George Street, Accounts, 1822 Accounts.



Trotter's account for work carried out at the George Street Rooms between 1808 and 1810 includes 'Making slips for seat furniture'.<sup>28</sup> The cartoon 'The Assembly Ball', from Thomas Rowlandson's *Comforts of Bath*, published in 1798 (see Fig.3), includes a chair in the right foreground which appears to be covered with a slip. The scene also shows a ballroom where the focus of the decoration is the wall surfaces and the chandeliers, with the bulk of the floor space left free for the boisterous dancing which is taking place, confirming the assertions made above regarding the nature of Assembly Room decoration.

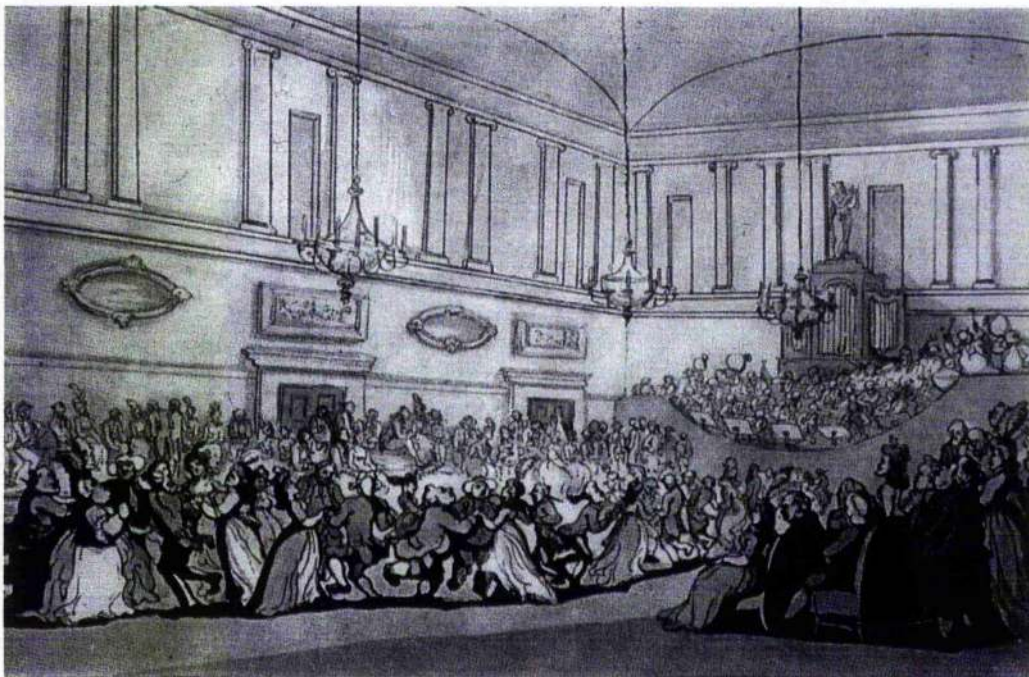


Fig.3: Print of *The Assembly Ball* by Thomas Rowlandson, first published c1798 (from Thomas Rowlandson, *Comforts of Bath*, Bath, 1985 (first published 1798)).

The rooms mentioned in Trotter's accounts relating to the George Street Assembly Rooms are a large and small ballroom, a tearoom and a saloon (in addition to a

<sup>28</sup> National Archives, GD1/377/42, Assembly Rooms, George Street, Accounts, Miscellaneous Accounts, 22 July 1812.



kitchen, obviously in the 'below stairs' portion of the Rooms). Robert Mudie, in *A Historical Account of His Majesty's Visit to Scotland*, published in 1822 (discussed in depth in the next chapter), mentions the same rooms, in addition to two card rooms, in his discussion of the preparation of the Rooms for the visit of George IV.

Fig.4 shows the ground plan of the Bath Rooms, indicating that all Assembly Rooms had an approximately similar suite of apartments within their premises.

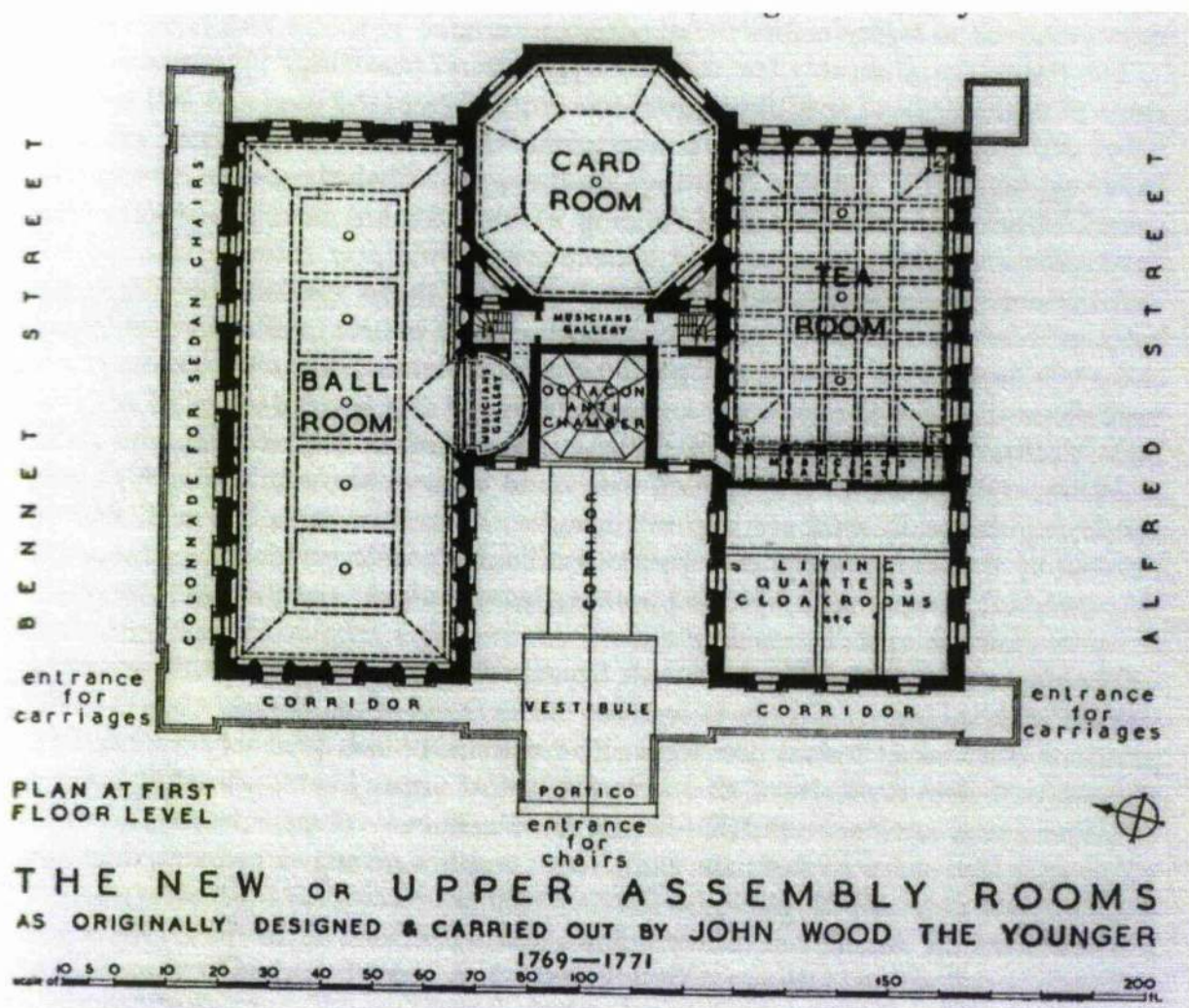


Fig.4: Ground plan of the New Assembly Rooms at Bath, built 1769-1771 (from Walter Ison, *The Georgian Buildings of Bath from 1700 to 1830*, Bath, 1969 (original edition 1948), p.51, fig. 1).

Trotter's George Street Assembly Room accounts imply that the use of bright colours with regard to the furnishing of the Rooms was, in general, limited to the fabrics used. The most lavish use of colour is to be found in the account relating to January 1815, when Trotter provided curtains for the ballroom and tearoom of blue moreen, with lace edging and a gold fringe.<sup>29</sup> Other curtains and porches were made using scarlet / crimson cloth. The view of the Bath Rooms (Fig.2) is devoid of such fabric embellishments, presumably destroyed in 1942, if not before, and not replaced. Although the image is in black and white, it can be seen that the main use of colour is in the inclusion of gilded areas on the architectural features of the interior, such as pilaster bases and the Greek key frieze that runs around the room. Trotter's earliest George Street Rooms account, relating to work carried out in 1805, mentions gilding being carried out, 'Eagles' and 'Lions' being mentioned specifically.<sup>30</sup> Although it is not made clear where these animals were located, the practical nature and lack of embellishment of the seat furniture featured in Trotter's accounts and in Figs 2 and 3 suggests that they may have constituted part of the interior architectural decoration. Although reference is made in a January 1816 account to nine forms covered with scarlet moreen, the bulk of the seat furniture, provided by Trotter in c1822, is covered with 'fine brown linen'.<sup>31</sup> The use of plain, pale upholstery fabrics can be seen in Figs 2 and 3.<sup>32</sup>

It can be seen, then, that Trotter's work at the George Street Assembly Rooms is representative of the decoration of other Assembly Rooms of the same period.

<sup>29</sup> National Archives, GD1/377/42, Assembly Rooms, George Street, Accounts, Miscellaneous Accounts, 25 Jan. 1816.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 2 April 1806.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 25 Jan. 1816, and 1822 Accounts.

<sup>32</sup> The chairs featured in Fig.2 may have been reupholstered since their manufacture, but it is reasonable to assume that the work was carried out using material sympathetic to the original colour scheme.

Furniture was mainly limited to practical seating in plain colours, embellishment being reserved for the interior architectural features and window drapery. The overall effect was therefore sparse when the rooms were unoccupied, but rather lavish when the walls and lustres were offset by a crowd of well-dressed dancers. However, the level of elegance and ostentation with which the George Street Rooms were usually decorated was to be surpassed by Trotter himself in preparation for the balls to be held there in honour of the Visit of George IV to Edinburgh.

## **Chapter 10: Trotter's Work for the Visit of George IV to Edinburgh**

There are two main sources of information on the Visit of King George IV to Edinburgh in 1822. Robert Mudie's contemporary account, *A Historical Account of His Majesty's Visit to Scotland*, provides incredibly detailed descriptions of every aspect of the visit, couched in the most reverential and embellished language. In contrast, the Town Council Minutes of 1822 and the years following provide more practical, 'facts and figures' information regarding the aspects of the visit with which they were involved. Together, these sources produce a clear picture of the scale and importance of the event, as well as allowing an assessment of Trotter's individual contribution.

The Visit of George IV to Edinburgh was a significant event in the history not just of Edinburgh, but also of Scotland. The removal of James VI to England in 1603 and the Union of 1707 had led to periods of difficulty and discontent in Scotland. As the King and his retinue, the Privy Council and Parliament moved south, so too did many of the powerful and wealthy figures of Edinburgh society who supported the economy. Aside from financial difficulties, there seems to have been a feeling amongst the Scots left behind that they had been abandoned and forgotten. A visit from King George IV was felt by some, if only in a symbolic sense, to be a sign that the country had not been forgotten, and that it did indeed have a monarch. Mudie, discussing the King's entry in the Palace of Holyrood at the start of his trip to the capital, states that the people:

...seemed to consider the entrance of His Majesty within the palace as completing the solemn inauguration of him as King Of Scotland, - as the



actual revival, under a modified form, of the Scottish Monarchy, - and an open recognition of all their public rights.'<sup>1</sup>

It has, however, been suggested that many of the city's inhabitants were originally somewhat unenthusiastic towards the proposed visit.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of the Visit (at least in the eyes of the authorities) was reflected in the scale and lavishness of the preparations. These were at their most extreme with regard to the entertainment arranged for the King. The main events of this nature were the Peers' Ball at the Assembly Rooms on George Street and the banquet organised by the Town Council at Parliament House. In the preparation of these two locations, Trotter played a key role. His decoration of the Assembly Rooms was not only incredibly lavish, but also on a massive scale. Although the Rooms were already rather grand, the decorations for the King's visit were entirely new. He decorated and provided furniture for the Principal Ballroom, the Second Ballroom, the Card-Room, the Great Supper Room and the Saloon, as well as the linking rooms and corridors. His achievements here are all the more remarkable in view of the speed at which he had to execute the work. Mudie states that:

...Mr Trotter was charged with the immediate execution of the whole arrangements; and the success of that gentleman in overcoming the many difficulties presented by the shortness of time, was such as to excite the astonishment of those who witnessed the result of his unexampled exertions.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mudie, R., *A Historical Account of His Majesty's Visit to Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1822, p.109.

<sup>2</sup> Palmer, A., *The Life and Times of George IV*, London, 1972, p.191.

<sup>3</sup> Mudie, Op Cit, p.218.



The Principal Ballroom measured 92 feet in length and 42 feet in width, with a ceiling 40 feet high.<sup>4</sup> It was Trotter's task to make this huge space literally 'fit for a king'. Mudie's description of this room, although somewhat lengthy, is worth quoting in full, as it gives such a clear picture of Trotter's work here:

...its decorations, which are characterized by simplicity, lightness and elegance, rather than by richness, consist of handsome fluted pilasters, of the Corinthian order, resting on the floor and supporting the cornice of the room; the centre of the south side is enriched with Corinthian columns of smaller dimensions, forming the decorations of the entrance, and supporting a balcony for the orchestra; the seven windows of the north side, with their splendid draperies, give a fine variety to the features of the room; and the elegance of the whole is summed up in the rich cut crystal lustres suspended from the ceiling... The principal object in the great room was the throne placed at the east end. It was hung with rich crimson velvet drapery, surmounted with a canopy and dome, decorated with the unicorn and lion, and the crown and cushion on top; the throne was raised upon a stage of two steps, covered with crimson cloth, and on each side of it stood a candelabrum, of an antique form, white and gold, decorated with a profusion of cut crystal; a stage, a little raised from the floor, covered with crimson cloth, filled up the east end of the room, on each side of the throne and extended throughout the whole length of the north side and west end; on this stage were placed the ranges of sofas for the company, covered with blue, and finished with gold-coloured fringes, corresponding with the draperies of the windows. On the west end were three

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

candelabra, similar to those near the throne, and a number of arm-chairs, crimson and gold, corresponding with three of the same pattern, placed on each side of the throne. In the body of the room, near each end, were placed two fine sofas covered with crimson velvet for the use of his Majesty. The floor was fancifully chalked, and, beside the crystal lustres suspended from the ceiling, the chimney-pieces and orchestra were decorated with elegant clusters of light.<sup>5</sup>

This passage raises a number of interesting points. Mudie's description of the decoration as simple, light and elegant as opposed to rich fits in with the use of the room as a space for entertainment rather than more serious pursuits. The decoration also seems to be 'surface' decoration rather than any radical reconstruction of the space or construction of fitted furniture. The use of draperies and light to create a lavish effect is almost theatrical. This may be partly due to the fact that Trotter was working to a tight schedule, not having the time to make more substantial changes. Cost may also have been an issue. Draperies and lighting would have been somewhat less expensive than large quantities of furniture. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the decoration of Assembly Rooms in general often focused on the wall surfaces and drapery, rather than on furniture *per se*.

The only actual furniture that Trotter appears to have provided for the room (aside from the various light fittings) was a range of seating. It can be seen, from the passage above, that the seating for the King and his retinue was covered in crimson cloth, whereas that for the 'company' was executed in blue. Blue (presumably due to its

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp 218-219.

appearance in the Saltire) was chosen as the colour of the Visit. For example, during the King's various processions through the streets, the spectators were asked to wear a 'uniform' of a blue coat with a white vest, together with white / nankeen (off-white) pantaloons and a St Andrew's cross on the hat as a cockade.<sup>6</sup> An Assembly Room chair dating from the Visit, now kept at Lauriston Castle near Edinburgh, may be one of those designed for use by the King and his men (see Fig.1).<sup>7</sup> The use of velvet for the King's throne and the sofas designed for his personal use underlined his status and separation from the rest of the assembly.

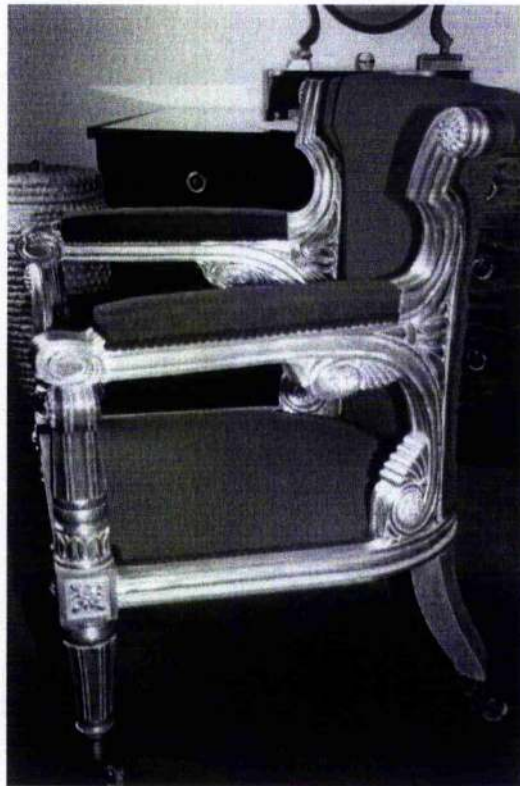


Fig.1: Chair from the George Street Assembly Rooms, c1822 (photo: David Jones, chair from collection of Lauriston Castle, Edinburgh).

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.18.

<sup>7</sup> The seating of the Principal Ballroom, the Second Ballroom, and possibly other rooms, was executed in a similar colour-scheme, the chair therefore belonging to any one of these rooms.

The room that Mudie describes as ‘...the object of by far the greatest novelty in the whole arrangement’ is the Great Supper-Room.<sup>8</sup> This room was a temporary building, erected in the courtyard off the Second Ballroom. It was decorated in the style of a tent, the walls and ceiling being covered in rose and white muslin, hung in alternate stripes, with rosettes added for extra embellishment. The curtains at the rear of the tent were parted to reveal a wall painted with Scottish scenery. The theatrical effect produced by Trotter in the Principal Ballroom was obviously continued here. This theatrical link is reinforced by the fact that the mural was painted by a ‘Mr Roberts’ of the Theatre Royal.<sup>9</sup>

In summing up the preparations at the Assembly Rooms, Mudie writes that:

...the whole was designed and executed by Mr Trotter, who, by the liberal conduct of the peers, was enabled to produce a *tout ensemble*, in this department, which, for effect, elegance, and grandeur, has never been equalled in this country.<sup>10</sup>

The lavish furnishings provided by Trotter for the Visit were obviously not all necessary for the use of the Assembly Rooms during its normal season. This, in addition to the fact that they had been paid for by the Peers who had organised the Ball, rather than the Assembly Room Directors, meant that much of the extra furniture and decorations made for the Visit were sold off. The Assembly Room Minute Book, held in the National Archives, mentions in the minutes of a meeting of the Directors

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<sup>8</sup> Mudie, *Op Cit*, p.220.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.220.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.221.

(no date is given, but a subsequent meeting suggests that the date was sometime between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 1823) that:

... the furniture and decorations which had been placed in the rooms for the Balls during His Majesty's visit were to be sold by public roup on the Thursday following: and after taking into consideration which part of these might be useful and of advantage to the Assembly rooms, the meeting resolved to purchase certain articles which they marked down in a printed Catalogue of the sale if they went cheap...<sup>11</sup>

An entry in the Assembly Room Vouchers (May 1822-May 1823), also held by the National Archives, lists the articles bought by the Directors. Aside from six armchairs, none of the specially made seat furniture was retained. The other articles bought were:

- 4 pediments with branches
- 2 bundles of branches
- 5 candelabra
- 240 yards of moreen
- 76 yards of drapery
- 5 platforms
- 14 sofa covers
- brass 'nosles'
- 2 chimney blinds

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<sup>11</sup> National Archives, GD1/377/6, Minute Book, Assembly Rooms, George Street, 1817, no page numbers.

- 2 cornices and brackets<sup>12</sup>

It can be seen from this list that a large proportion of the furniture and decoration was therefore sold on elsewhere. The Assembly Room records do not indicate who purchased the items, and they may have been dispersed over a wide area, due to the eagerness of people to own memorabilia from the Visit.<sup>13</sup>

The other large public commission received by Trotter in connection with the King's Visit was the decoration of Parliament House, in preparation for a banquet to His Majesty organised by the Town Council (see Fig. 2). The Great Hall of Parliament House had previously been used for the sitting of the Scottish Parliament, and its size, according to Mudie, was '...inferior only to that of Westminster'.<sup>14</sup> Mudie's description of the fitting out of this room is again worth quoting at length:

The great Hall...was fitted up for the occasion in a style of superior magnificence. The platform, upon which the king's table was raised, was covered with crimson cloth; and beneath were six tables, in 3 distinct ranges, extending to the north end of the room...The large Gothic windows on the west side were hung with curtains of crimson cloth, with yellow fringing, the modern elegance of which blended most gracefully with the antique grandeur of the room. On the opposite side, crimson moreen draperies were tastefully disposed around the door and the two Gothic niches, where the Outer-house Judges hold their sittings. At the south end, which has a fine large Gothic

<sup>12</sup> National Archives, GD1/377/42, Assembly Room Vouchers, May 1822-May 1823, no page numbers etc.

<sup>13</sup> For example, a mahogany step was laid out at the Port of Leith to receive the King's first footstep on dry land. The wood was later made into souvenir snuff boxes (Mudie, *Op Cit*, pp 34-5)

<sup>14</sup> Mudie, *Op Cit*, p.23.



window, a curtain of crimson cloth with yellow fringing, served as a drapery to the royal arms, which surmounted the chair and canopy of state, and covered the whole of the window. At the north end, a similar drapery opened, and exhibited the arms of the city of Edinburgh...The two niches in which the Lords Ordinary sit were fitted up as balconies...The room was lighted with three large and magnificent lustres, running along, with three smaller lustres on each side, all depending on the roof. 4 beautifully gilded lustres were suspended behind the King's table and one at each corner of the north end of the room. There was, besides, a profusion of lights upon the tables, beaming from candlesticks variously formed, of the most beautifully chased workmanship...'<sup>15</sup>



Fig.2: Pull-out print of the banquet organised by the Town Council of Edinburgh for the Visit of George IV, 1822 (from Robert Mudie, *A Historical Account of His Majesty's Visit to Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1822, fold out page between pp 232-233).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp 228-229.

Mudie does not state explicitly whether or not Trotter provided the banqueting chairs and tables. However, a reference in the Town Council Minutes of the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 1822 states that the Chamberlain was authorised to pay:

...to Mr Trotter £900 in full of his account of £987 for sundry furnishings and fitting up the banqueting room on the occasion of the King's Visit.<sup>16</sup>

This suggests that he might have provided furniture as well as drapery and decorations, as the amount paid to him is so large.

The total expense of the banquet was much greater than the amount paid to Trotter. The accounts of the Council for the year 1822 to 1823 state that the expense of the event was £2659.19.<sup>17</sup> In volume 185 of the Minutes, which runs from the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 1822 to the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 1823, there are abstracts of the accounts which detail the other expenses incurred in preparing for the banquet, as well as the other events arranged by the Town Council. These include money paid to: Nathaniel Gow for a band at the banquet; John Kay for turtle meat; Mackay & Cunningham for the loan of silver plate; Leith Roperie Co. for roping the viewing scaffolds (to view the processions of the King); John Galloway, Tailor, for making and repairing the Magistrates' robes and liveries; William Heriot, Printer, for check cards for the wine, Thomas Edwards for horses for the carriages; Peter Forbes, for Port and Ginger Beer; James Glass for illuminating the Exchange; Eagle and Henderson, Florists, for decorating the Magistrates' scaffold, James Ritchie for making a platform and for

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<sup>16</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 185, 11 Sept. 1822-5 Feb. 1823, 11 Dec. 1822, p.268.

<sup>17</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 189, 11 Feb. 1824-30 June 1824, 18 Feb. 1824, p.33.

fireworks; Agnes Bonar, for lodging cooks; and to W.M. Brown and Co. for a whip for the State Coachman.<sup>18</sup>

This small sample indicates both the scale of the operation and the expense incurred. In a similar manner to the Assembly Rooms, articles that had been purchased for the banquet and were now surplus to requirements were disposed of in order to recoup some of the cost. A Town Council Minute of the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 1822 notes that a committee had been appointed to dispose of the various 'articles and utensils' used at Parliament House for the banquet.<sup>19</sup> A College Commissioners' Minute of the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 1823 indicates that the College was the recipient of at least one item from the banquet furnishings. The College Committee reported that:

...since their minute refusing to furnish curtains to the Senate Hall; part of the Hangings used in the Parliament House, on the occasion of the Banquet given to his Majesty had been procured on moderate terms, and that they had sanctioned the purchase for that purpose...<sup>20</sup>

And so furnishings from one of Trotter's commissions found their way to another of his commissions. It may even be that he suggested the purchase, being aware of which items were being sold off. The Minute states that the curtains had been purchased for £19.5.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 185, 11 Sept. 1822- 5 Feb. 1823, pp 40-41, 140-145, 223, 241, 252.

<sup>19</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 185, 11 Sept. 1822-5 Feb. 1823, 18 Sept. 1822, pp 40-41.

<sup>20</sup> E.C.A., College Commissioners' Minutes, 2/98-2/165, 1818-1824, 18 Jan. 1823.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

The mention above of 'Mackay and Cunningham' being paid for the loan of silver plate raises an interesting point. As well as many other examples of the loan of silver plate, the Town Council accounts relating to the Visit also include the hiring of napery, 'chrystal' and china.<sup>22</sup> This can be seen as part of Edinburgh's wider culture of hiring, which included the renting of fully furnished New Town properties, in which Trotter himself was involved. With regard to property, this allowed those who did not reside in Edinburgh year-round to be accommodated in fashionable and comfortable surroundings without the logistical difficulties of moving their own household effects. In the case of items such as silver and napery, the hiring system supported the prevalent culture of lavish entertaining on a grand scale.

Trotter's work for the Visit at the Palace of Holyrood is beyond the scope of this study, being a private building, but one or two points relating to his work here should be noted. Firstly, Trotter was paid £1470 for the furnishings necessary for the King's reception and levee held at the palace.<sup>23</sup> This would have added considerably to the profit he made from the Visit. Secondly, Mudie, in his description of the work carried out at the palace, states that:

Directions were issued to Mr Trotter, his Majesty's upholsterer, for fitting up the apartments requisite for his Majesty's accommodation.<sup>24</sup>

This description of Trotter as 'his Majesty's upholsterer' is rather interesting. It may be that Mudie applies this term to him purely due to the fact that he carried out work

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<sup>22</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 185, 11 Sept. 1822- 5 Feb. 1823, p.141, 143, 144.

<sup>23</sup> Bamford, F., *A Dictionary of Edinburgh Wrights and Furniture Makers, 1660-1840*, Furniture History, 1983, p.118.

<sup>24</sup> Mudie, Op Cit, p.21.

in the palace. However, it may be that Trotter had been declared as such by the King himself. Such an accolade would be proof of Trotter's standing as the pre-eminent cabinet-maker in Edinburgh, if not Scotland, at the time. However, no sources have been found, other than Mudie, where Trotter is referred to / refers to himself as, 'his Majesty's upholsterer.'

As well as the large and lucrative commissions he received due to the King's Visit, Trotter did not waste the opportunity to make extra income through smaller pieces of work. For example, a Town Council minute of the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 1827 refers to him finally receiving payment for a piece of drugget for the scaffold erected at the Tron Church for the King's Visit.<sup>25</sup>

The events laid on for the Visit of King George to Edinburgh should be seen in the wider context of other Royal Visits, particularly that of George to Ireland in 1821. This visit, focusing on Dublin, consisted of a similar round of levees, processions, banquets and balls to those arranged in the Scottish capital.<sup>26</sup> A banquet was laid on by the Corporation of Dublin, presaging the event arranged by Edinburgh Town Council. The Dublin banquet was held in a room built specially for the occasion, designed to represent a Moorish Palace.<sup>27</sup> This level of theatricality was seen at the Supper Room of the George Street Assembly Rooms in Edinburgh, for the Peers' Ball. In Dublin, Irish harpers played at the banquet, while the accounts for the Edinburgh banquet include payments made to 'Nathaniel Gow' for a band.<sup>28</sup> In Dublin, a dinner was also laid on by Trinity College, the library of the University

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<sup>25</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 201, 11 Apr. 1827-22 Aug. 1827, 9 May 1827, p.94.

<sup>26</sup> Richardson, J., *George IV: A Portrait*, London, 1966, pp 228-234.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.233.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.233, and E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 185, 11 Sept. 1822- 5 Feb. 1823, pp 40-41.



being used as a reception room, and the theatre as a dining room.<sup>29</sup> A similar event was not held at the College of Edinburgh, perhaps due to the fact that work on the College complex was not completed by the date of the Visit.

The description by Mudie of the banquet laid on at Parliament House by the Town Council of Edinburgh, together with the print included in his account of the Visit, also bear comparison with images of the King's coronation banquet in Westminster Hall, which took place in 1821. Fig.3, a painting by Jones, shows the King's end of the hall. The crimson moreen draperies with yellow fringes, the raised platform, throne and canopy for the King, the large quantities of silver plate and the glittering lustres depicted are also described by Mudie in relation to the Edinburgh Banquet.<sup>30</sup> Fig.4 shows the view of Westminster Hall from the King's platform. The arrangement of the tables in long ranges, decked with silver plate and 'candlesticks variously formed' (to quote Mudie's description above relating to the Edinburgh banquet) also finds a parallel in Mudie's description and its related print (see Fig.2). Mudie mentions, in his preliminary remarks about the banquet, that the Great Hall of Parliament House was of a size '...inferior only to that of Westminster'.<sup>31</sup> The Town Council of Edinburgh may, in their preparations for the Visit banquet, have been attempting to rival the coronation banquet at the larger and more magnificent Westminster Hall. Prints of the latter would have been available as souvenirs of the coronation, and it is possible that the Council / Trotter himself may have looked to such prints when designing the layout and decoration of their own event.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., (Richardson), p.234.

<sup>30</sup> Mudie, *Op Cit*, pp 228-229.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.23.



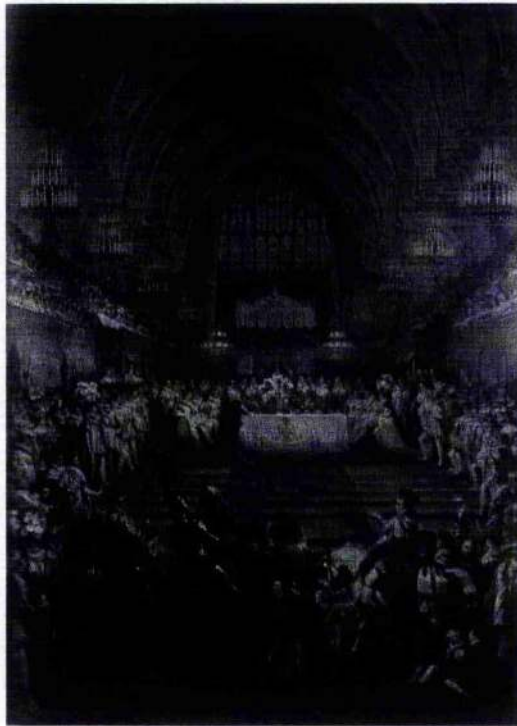


Fig.3: Painting by Jones of the Coronation Banquet of George IV, Westminster Hall, 19 July 1821 (from Alan Palmer *The Life and Times of George IV*, London, 1972, p.157).

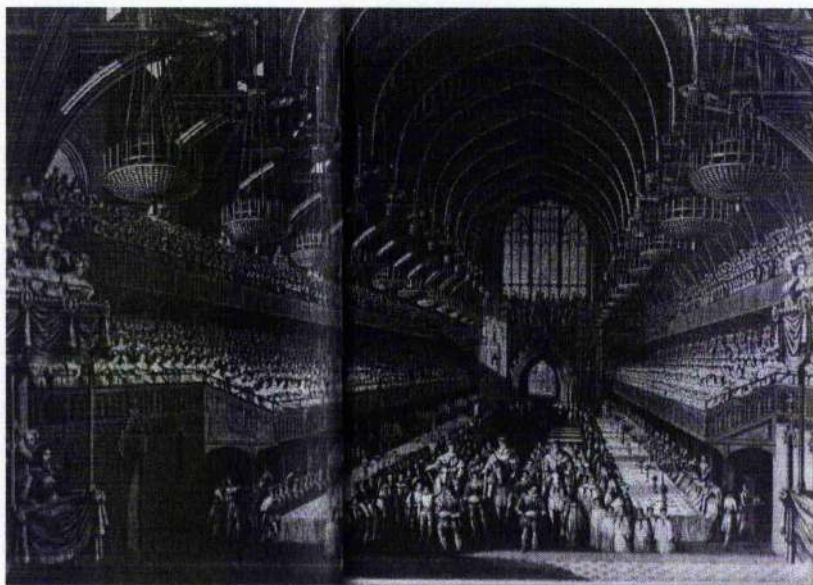


Fig.4: Print of 'the bringing up of the second course' at the Coronation Banquet of George IV, Westminster Hall, 19 July 1821 (artist unknown) (from Alan Palmer, *The Life and Times of George IV*, London, 1972, pp 166-167).

As well as his involvement with the furnishings for the Visit, Trotter was also involved in other ways. He was appointed one of the Superintendents in charge of arrangements for the Parliament Hall Banquet.<sup>32</sup> He also, like hundreds of others throughout Edinburgh, displayed an illumination (normally of candles / lamps and coloured glass) in honour of the King in the window of his premises on Princes Street. Mudie describes it thus:

(A) Transparency of the royal arms surmounted by the crown, and supported by the rose and thistle, in variegated lamps.<sup>33</sup>

Trotter's work for the Visit of George IV can be considered as his highest profile public work in the capital, due to the importance of the event and the number of people who saw it.<sup>34</sup> It is particularly interesting for the furniture historian, as it shows a whole new aspect of his work. The creation of a temporary, lavish, and theatrical backdrop to the Visit of the monarch contrasts with his work for the august institutions of the College and the Library of the Faculty of Advocates. Any consideration of Trotter's oeuvre as a whole must include this commission in order to gain a well-rounded view of his work.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.229.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.125.

<sup>34</sup> Numbers in Edinburgh for the Visit were huge. The King's procession to the Palace, for example, was watched by 300, 000 people, 1/7<sup>th</sup> of the population of Scotland at the time. (Ibid., p.110).

## **Chapter 11: The Library of the Faculty of Advocates**

The Library of the Faculty of Advocates was established in 1680, and was formally opened in 1689.<sup>1</sup> As well as being a working legal library, it also contained a range of historical, literary and other texts. In addition to being a copyright library, the Faculty also acquired a number of valuable early manuscripts. Stark, in his *Picture of Edinburgh*, published in 1825, notes that the library was ‘...one of the most valuable in Britain’, and was therefore ‘...much resorted to by strangers visiting the City’.<sup>2</sup> From 1702, the library was housed in the ‘laigh hall’ of Parliament House, immediately below Parliament Hall.<sup>3</sup> A patchwork of other rooms adjoining the laigh hall were granted to the Faculty as the library grew, including the Register Rooms, which held the records of the city before their removal to Register House, and the ‘ward’ room / lumber room to the north of the laigh hall, given in 1771 and 1772 respectively.<sup>4</sup>

This patchwork of rooms was soon overflowing with books, and various proposals began to be put forward for new and more spacious accommodation. The 1752 Pamphlet ‘Proposals for carrying on certain Public Works in the City of Edinburgh’, produced by the Convention of Royal Burghs, included plans to erect a building for Law Courts, the Town Council, ‘several registers’, the Advocates Library, and others, in Parliament Close.<sup>5</sup> These plans were never carried out as proposed. In 1770, the Writers to the Signet first proposed a joint building with the Faculty, but the proposal

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon Brown, Iain, *Building for Books: The Architectural Evolution of the Advocates Library 1689-1925*, Aberdeen, 1989, p.24.

<sup>2</sup> Stark, *Picture of Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1825, p.133.

<sup>3</sup> Gordon Brown, *Op Cit*, p.27.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p.52.

<sup>5</sup> Youngson, A.J., *The Making of Classical Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1966, p.3.

came to nothing.<sup>6</sup> In 1791, after encouragement from the Faculty Treasurer Allan Maconochie (later Lord Meadowbank), Robert Adam produced a series of ambitious designs to house the Inner-House court room, judges' robing and retiring rooms, rooms for the Clerks of Session, a public hall, and libraries for the Writers to the Signet and the Faculty.<sup>7</sup> These designs were not executed.

In 1807, the Faculty made a concerted effort to secure new accommodation for their library. The Treasurer of the Faculty wrote to Robert Saunders Dundas (2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Melville), M.P. for Midlothian, to ask for his support in obtaining the relevant Government funds.<sup>8</sup> The main thrust of the Faculty's argument was that the Government owed the library its support due to its status as a 'national' library. The Treasurer wrote that:

It is universally considered as a proper repository for preserving whatever may illustrate the History, Laws or Antiquities of the Country. Foreign nations treat it as a national library, and the Government of this Country had patronised it as a fit object of public care.<sup>9</sup>

Although this statement can be considered partially as persuasive rhetoric, it underlines the importance of the library in national and international terms, which helps to explain why the library which Trotter was to furnish was required to be so palatial. Acts of 1806 and 1808 authorised the demolition of part of the old Court buildings, and their replacement with accommodation for the Courts of Justice, the

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<sup>6</sup> Gordon Brown, *Op Cit*, p.49.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.68.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

Faculty and other bodies.<sup>10</sup> The Faculty gave up the land they had purchased to secure their current library from fire in return for the promise of accommodation in the new arrangement.<sup>11</sup>

Robert Reid, at this point the 'King's Architect and Surveyor in Scotland' was appointed by the Trustees (appointed under the new Acts) to draw up plans for a range of buildings to provide accommodation for the Faculty and the Writers to the Signet, as well as other legal offices.<sup>12</sup> The Faculty's library was to be on the upper floor, above the Writers' accommodation, and was to be linked to Parliament House and the old complex of library rooms based around the laigh hall.<sup>13</sup> By 1812, the Faculty had appointed a committee to consider Reid's plans for fitting up the library. Both the Faculty and the Writers to the Signet were unhappy with Reid's designs for the interior, and William Stark was appointed to draw up alternative plans. The work was, however, to be supervised by Reid.<sup>14</sup>

Any committee minutes regarding the selection of Trotter as cabinet-maker are no longer extant, but the Faculty of Advocates Records, now held by the National Library, do include an account, dated December 1820, which details the entire commission for the fitting out of the library. The account is extensive, including a number of sundries such as blinds and matting, but the actual furniture provided consisted of:

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.81.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.84.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.89.

- 4 Mahogany scroll back Easy Chairs the back seat and elbows round stuf in fine mazarine blue cloth finished with silk gimp and cord
- 24 Mahogany spindle back Chairs caned seats
- 4 large Grecian sofas of Mahogany neatly thermed and panelled round stuf with bordered hair squabs covered with fine blue cloth finished with silk gimp and cord
- 15 Benches 9 feet long each round stuf in fine blue moreen finished with tape and brafs nails
- 2 Large Mahogany writing tables with a writing board in each and a drawer on the side of each on strong pillar legs
- 6 Mahogany writing table the tops inlaid with fine blue cloth one drawer containing writing board in each on end pillars and claws
- 4 Elegant Mahogany Grecian Easy Chairs richly carved and panelled on strong brafs socket Castors nicely stuf in prime red Morocco finished with silk gimp and tufts
- 36 Handsome Mahogany Chairs broad carved top and stay rails the backs and seat stuf in the French style in best red morocco finished with gimp & tufted
- 2 large thermed Grecian Sofas neatly carved in the richest manner and pannelled nicely stuf in prime red morocco finished with silk gimp
- A large Do. Do. to match
- 16 Mahogany Chairs carved back and seats with carved leaf at the corners
- An Elegant Circular table of fine Mahogany supported on 4 columns and large panelled Centre pillar resting on a plinth on trufses with richly carved mouldings



- 4 Mahogany writing tables the tops inlaid with fine crimson cloth supported on carved ornamental ends with claws
- 2 Large Mahogany writing tables the tops inlaid with fine Crimson Cloth sunk pannelled rails on mafsive carved legs
- 2 Mahogany oblong Tables on end pillars and claws
- 2 Do. Do. Do.
- A Handsome Mahogany reading stand with an upper and under frame the under one panelled & the upper one enlaid with fine blue cloth on pillar and 3 claws.<sup>15</sup>

Trotter was paid a total of £1100 for the work.<sup>16</sup> The account highlights a number of interesting points. In a similar manner to the College of Edinburgh, Trotter provided for the Faculty library a suite of furniture including both practical items with a specific function related to the nature of the space, and items closer to domestic furniture. On the functional side, the account details a range of seating, from spindle back chairs with cane seats and upholstered benches to mahogany chairs with / without stuffed seats. Fourteen writing tables are mentioned, presumably designed for the consultation of books / note-making. A reading stand is also listed. Despite their predominantly functional purpose, these items were not devoid of embellishment. For example, the 16 mahogany chairs listed are noted as having ‘carved leaf’ decoration at the corners. Similarly, four writing tables are mentioned which are ‘...supported on carved ornamental ends with claws....’.

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<sup>15</sup> N.L.S., Faculty of Advocates Records, FR340, Account The Faculty of Advocates to William Trotter, Dec. 1820.

<sup>16</sup> N.L.S., Faculty of Advocates Records, FR340, Receipt, Trotter to Faculty, 13 March 1822, £500. Also, Receipt Trotter to Faculty, 15 Nov. 1822, £600.

In addition to these primarily functional items, the account also includes eight easy chairs, seven 'Grecian' sofas and four oblong tables (whose function is not specified, unlike the writing tables), pieces perhaps not essential to the functioning of the library, but obviously providing an advanced level of comfort. Such pieces are paralleled by those provided for the Natural History Museum of the College of Edinburgh between November 1821 and September 1822. This commission included a mahogany ottoman covered in red morocco, a suite of chairs and an oblong mahogany table (as well as other similarly 'domestic' items).<sup>17</sup> The old library rooms had been used for a mixture of research and more social activities, a complaint being made in 1777 that one room was being used as a coffee-room and consultation room, amongst other uses.<sup>18</sup> By the time of the erection of the new library, such a varied use of the space had become accepted. A library was no longer seen as solely a storage area for books, new libraries being designed to include salubrious surroundings for the consultation of the books. The new library was furnished with this in mind. Thomas Shepherd's watercolour of the new library, engraved in 1829, hints at this multiplicity of function (see Fig.1). A group can be seen consulting papers in the centre of the room, and a lone figure on the left of the view appears to be reading, but the two groups on the right of the view seem either to be enjoying a conversation or taking a turn about the room. The extravagant dress of the ladies, with their enormous and elaborate hats, suggests that the room, as with the College Museum, was designed for mingling as well as more academic pursuits.

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<sup>17</sup> E.C.A., 3/38-3/57, Estimates, Contracts and Accounts (College), Account No.9, Dec. 1820-Nov. 1823.

<sup>18</sup> Gordon Brown, *Op Cit*, p.55.

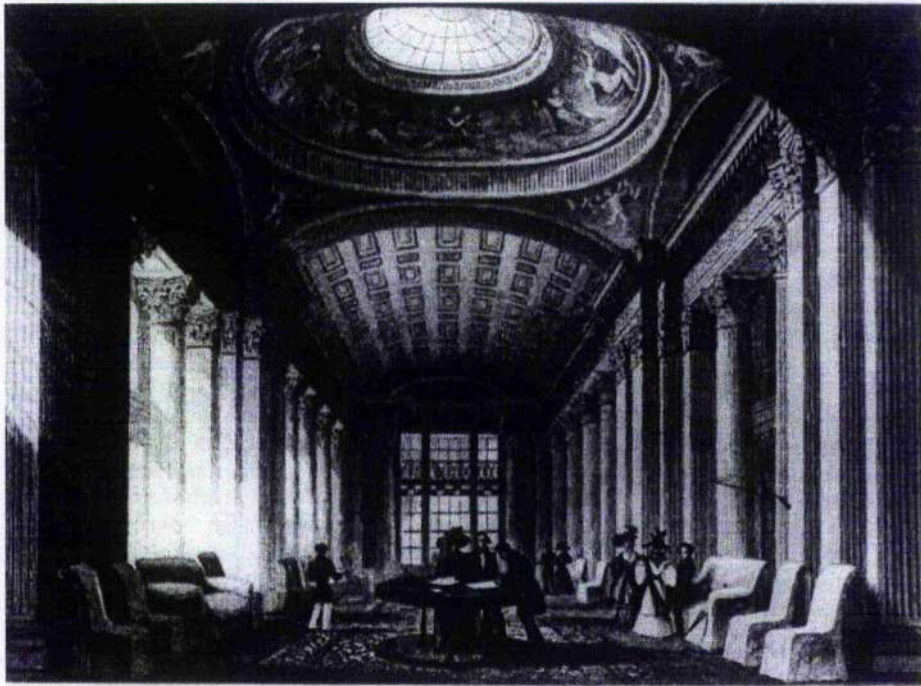


Fig.1: 1829 engraving of the watercolour by Thomas Shepherd of the Faculty of Advocates' Library (from Iain Gordon Brown, *Building for Books: The Architectural Evolution of the Advocates' Library 1689-1925*, Aberdeen, 1989, fig. 44).

It is interesting to compare the colour scheme of the library with that of the College Museum. The scheme of the library was predominantly blue and red, with the occasional use of crimson for the inlays of some of the writing tables. The slip-covers made for the furniture were brown glazed linen.<sup>19</sup> In contrast, the College Museum scheme centred on the use of crimson, with some red morocco leather, and a small amount of grey (for the drugget flooring).<sup>20</sup> This appears to have been a much more subdued palette. The use of drugget flooring in the Museum is also in contrast to the library which, in addition to the use of mixed baize and painted floor cloth, also

<sup>19</sup> N.L.S., Faculty of Advocates Records, FR340, Account The Faculty of Advocates to William Trotter, Dec. 1820.

<sup>20</sup> For a fuller discussion of the College Museum interior, see Chapter 5.

contained bordered Brussels carpet.<sup>21</sup> The colour scheme of the library seems to have been closer in feel to Hunterian Museum in Glasgow, fitted out by Cleland & Jack in 1809.<sup>22</sup> The scheme here was crimson, black and green, with additional highlights being provided by the use of brass and ivory. The Hunterian was in fact designed by William Stark, the designer of the Faculty library's interior. It is unclear what hand, if any, Stark had in the design of the actual furniture for these commissions, but it seems likely that he would have at least provided guidelines for the cabinet-makers regarding the overall colour scheme.

The interior of the Faculty library was not, however, an unrestrained riot of colour. The account, dated 1822, of Robert Buchan's painter work in the library still survives amongst the Faculty Records. The account pertains to work carried out between April 1820 and May 1821, amounting to £362.13.6.<sup>23</sup> It reveals that the new library was painted predominantly in shades of brown, especially fawn, with elements of bronze on the bookcases.<sup>24</sup> This muted palette must have served to highlight the colourful upholstery / inlays of the furniture. Muted tones may also have been chosen so as not to detract from the centrepiece of the room, the cupola, painted by Thomas Stothard, known throughout Scotland as an illustrator of Burns.<sup>25</sup> Completed in July 1822, it was decorated with Apollo and the muses, along with various prominent poets, orators, historians and philosophers.<sup>26</sup> The print of Shepherd's watercolour view of

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<sup>21</sup> N.L.S., Faculty of Advocates Records, FR340, Account The Faculty of Advocates to William Trotter, Dec. 1820.

<sup>22</sup> This commission is discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

<sup>23</sup> N.L.S., Faculty of Advocates Records, FR340, Account the Faculty of Advocates to Robert Buchan, 1822.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Gordon Brown, *Op Cit*, p.97.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

the library (see Fig.1) shows the cupola, with a very large circular table positioned underneath it. The Trotter account includes a similar table, described as:

An Elegant Circular table of fine Mahogany supported on 4 columns and large panelled centre pillar resting on a plinth on trufses with rich carved mouldings.<sup>27</sup>

The account includes only one circular table, and this fact, together with the Shepherd view, suggests that the table was designed specifically for positioning under the cupola. As well as providing a well-lit, sizable area for the consultation of books, the table must have drawn attention to the cupola, re-emphasising the ostentatious centrepiece of the scheme.

The new library was well received by some visitors. Johann Kohl, a German visitor who wrote of his experiences in *Ireland, Scotland and England* in 1844, described how he ‘...reclined upon splendid sofas, my feet rested on excellent carpets...’<sup>28</sup> He commented more generally that the library united ‘...all the elegance and luxury of a London club with the learned wealth and seclusion of a German Library’.<sup>29</sup> Although this comment was meant positively, it does highlight the deficiencies of the library that other users complained of. An article in the *Caledonian Mercury* of the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 1826 stated that Stark had adapted the building ‘to a purpose not originally

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<sup>27</sup> N.L.S., Faculty of Advocates Records, FR340, Account the Faculty of Advocates to William Trotter, Dec. 1820.

<sup>28</sup> Johann Kohl, in Ballantyne, G.H., *The Signet Library, Edinburgh, and its Librarians 1722-1972*, Glasgow, 1979, p.81.

<sup>29</sup> Johann Kohl in Gordon Brown, *Op Cit*, p.94.



intended'.<sup>30</sup> This view was reinforced by Sir Walter Scott, a member of the Faculty, who complained that:

During all my life we have mismanaged the large funds expended on the rooms of our library, totally mistaking the objects for which a library is built...and bestowing an absurd degree of ornament and finery upon the internal finishing.<sup>31</sup>

Iain Gordon Brown, in *Building for Books: The Architectural Evolution of the Advocates Library 1689-1925*, discusses the old-fashioned design of the library in detail.<sup>32</sup> The main problem, highlighted by Scott above in saying that the Faculty had mistaken '...the objects for which a library is built...', was that the library had been designed more as a social space than the functioning library which the Faculty so desperately needed. This, as discussed above, is reflected by the furniture provided. Instead of an arrangement like the College library, where closely-packed book stacks were separated from a reading area, the Faculty's library consisted of one large book-lined hall, with very little of the total floor space taken up with the books themselves. Gordon Brown notes that this arrangement could be seen in Baroque libraries on the Continent, which were also highly decorated.<sup>33</sup> This may explain why Johann Kohl appreciated the room so much, and drew parallels with German libraries.<sup>34</sup> Fig.2 shows a part of Robert Adam's second proposed design for the redevelopment of the Parliament House complex, dating from 1791. It shows an octagon tower as the Faculty's new library. It can be clearly seen from the plan that the library was

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<sup>30</sup> Ballantyne, Op Cit, p.73.

<sup>31</sup> *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, pp 396-7, 15 Dec. 1827, in Gordon Brown, Op Cit, p.122.

<sup>32</sup> Gordon Brown, Op Cit, pp 90-91.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.91.

<sup>34</sup> Johann Kohl in Gordon Brown, Op Cit, p.94.



designed as a series of book-lined halls. Stark's later designs for the interior of the library as built may have drawn inspiration from Adam's unexecuted designs.

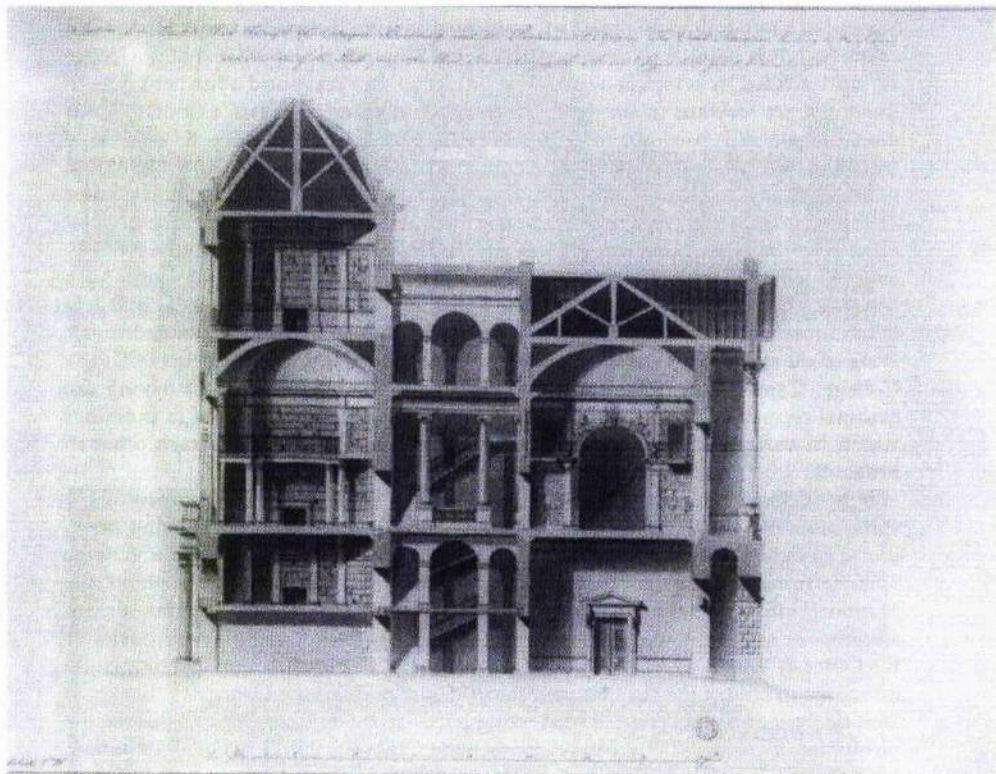


Fig.2: Part of Robert Adam's second proposed design for the redevelopment of the Parliament House complex, dating from 1791 and featuring an octagon tower of books on the east front (from Iain Gordon Brown, *Building for Books: The Architectural Evolution of the Advocates' Library 1689-1925*, Aberdeen, 1989, fig. 33).

In total, the Faculty's new library had cost them approximately £12,000.<sup>35</sup> Through such vast expenditure, they had created a room which was, quite literally, 'fit for a king'. During the State Banquet at Parliament House to celebrate the visit of George IV to Edinburgh in 1822, the Advocates Library was turned into the King's retiring room. Within two years, however, the thoughts of the Faculty were turning toward the provision of new accommodation. The number of volumes owned by the library was

<sup>35</sup> Shepherd, T.H., *Modern Athens Displayed in a Series of Views: or Edinburgh in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1969 (original edition 1831), p.74.

still vastly outstripping the available space, due to a great extent to the impractical arrangement of the room. The fire of 1824 which destroyed a number of buildings in the Parliament Hall area was seen as an opportunity to erect a new library on another site which would be more suitable for the Faculty's needs.<sup>36</sup> In order to raise the requisite funds for the new venture, the Faculty found it necessary to part with their library. In 1826 the Writers to the Signet, whose own library was situated below that of the Faculty, agreed to purchase the upper room for the sum of £12,000.<sup>37</sup> In addition to this, the Writers to the Signet also paid £300 for the furniture of the room, a fraction of the total cost of £1100. The Faculty Minutes note the reasons for the Library Committee deciding to dispose of the furniture. The minutes state that:

...as the above furniture had been esprefsly made for the Room, it might be expedient to dispose of it to the Writers to the Signet at a valuation, and to purchase other furniture for the new Library, when needed...<sup>38</sup>

In the Treasurer's Statements for 1833, there is a note pertaining to the sale of the furniture dated May 21<sup>st</sup>:

To payment from Andrews Storie W.S. Treasurer of the Society of Writers to the Signet of price of Furniture in Upper Library, sold to them by the Faculty – P. Estimate of Mefsr's Trotter and Burns, and mutual letters.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Gordon Brown, *Op Cit*, p.112.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p.120.

<sup>38</sup> N.L.S., Faculty of Advocates Records, FR7, Faculty Minutes 1830-1842, p.157.

<sup>39</sup> N.L.S., Faculty of Advocates Records, FR44B, Treasurer's Statements 1827-1838, 1833, p.3.

The 'Burns' referred to here may be William Burn, who carried out work on the heating system of the upper library in 1832, and modified a staircase in 1834. It appears, then, that the generally agreed value of the furniture was only £300, perhaps due to the fact that it was more than a decade old.

Work on the new library for the Faculty, designed by W.H. Playfair, began in 1830. The Special Collections department of the University of Edinburgh Library hold a number of plans and sections for it in the *Playfair Catalogue of Architectural Drawings*. As with the Playfair drawings for the College, those found here include the internal architecture of the library, such as fireplaces and door surrounds, and the fitted bookcases, but none of the movable furniture.<sup>40</sup> The bookcases, based on those at the British Museum (visited by Playfair himself), were made in London and shipped to Edinburgh for installation in the new library.<sup>41</sup> In 1834, the firm of Trotter (William having died the previous year) were paid £205 for furniture for this new space.<sup>42</sup> There appear to be no accounts / estimates / inventories amongst the Faculty Records detailing the nature of the furniture provided, or to what extent Playfair was involved in its design. The small amount of money paid for it suggests that either the number of pieces provided was limited or that the furniture was much simpler than that produced for the previous premises.

Had the details of this last commission by Trotter for the Faculty of Advocates remained in existence, they would have provided an interesting contrast with the College library. The Faculty's 'Statement connected with the building of the New

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<sup>40</sup> Edinburgh University Library, Special Collections Division, *Playfair Catalogue of Architectural Drawings*. Those pertaining to the Advocates Library consist of the running numbers 694-802.

<sup>41</sup> Gordon Brown, *Op Cit*, p.148.

<sup>42</sup> N.L.S., Faculty of Advocates Records, FR44B, Treasurer's Statements 1827-1838, 1834, p.3.



Library', of the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 1830, notes that Playfair had succeeded at the College '...in there forming a Library of the greatest interior beauty, and of experienced practical utility'.<sup>43</sup> This was obviously a library based on more modern principals than Reid and Stark's book-lined Baroque hall, and it was this more practical arrangement that the Faculty desired for their new library. If the necessary details of this latter commission had survived, it would have allowed a comparison of two practical working libraries designed by Playfair, one furnished by A.O. Turnbull and one by Trotter. A comparison of the two might allow an insight into the relative input into the furniture design process of the architect and the cabinet-maker in each case.



Fig.3: Contemporary view of the Upper Signet Library (formerly the Faculty of Advocates' Library), including the Trotter furniture originally provided in c1820 (from Iain Gordon Brown, *Building for Books: The Architectural Evolution of the Advocates' Library 1689-1925*, Aberdeen, 1989, fig. 43).

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<sup>43</sup> Gordon Brown, Op cit, p.123.

With regard to the Faculty's earlier premises, it can be seen that Trotter provided a library in which learning and more social pursuits could take place, in this way drawing parallels with the College Museum. Both commissions include items of furniture with a practical use specific to their particular environment, such as storage cabinets for specimens in the Museum and writing desks in the library, in addition to suites of furniture in a more 'domestic' style, designed to add to the comfort of the rooms. Where the library differs from the Museum is in the exuberance of the interior decoration, reflected in the colour scheme of the furniture. A spacious hall, with the books stacked neatly in unobtrusive niches, leaving a large expanse of open floor, lighted by a heavily decorated cupola, must have allowed Trotter's furniture to be displayed to full effect. Fig.3 shows the library as it is today, and the central place of Trotter's furniture within an ambitious scheme can still be seen.

## **Chapter 12: Conclusion**

From the evidence discussed in previous chapters, it is possible to draw a number of conclusions about the way in which Trotter gained his various high-profile public commissions. These conclusions provide an insight not only into the working practices of Trotter and his firm, but also into the political system of the city of Edinburgh in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The well-established reputation of the family firm (discussed in detail below) may have been the major factor in the initial employment of Trotter by the Town Council. The earliest work completed by him for the Council (on the City churches) dates from 1805, before he gained his first position on the Council. This would seem to suggest that it was the firm's reputation for quality workmanship rather than any political influence held by Trotter that prompted the Council's choice. However, once Trotter was on the Council, he received a number of commissions which can be seen as being linked to his specific positions. When Trotter became a Merchant Councillor in 1806, he was made Bailie of the Wheat Meal and Corn Markets. This position may have led to him obtaining commissions such as the work he carried out in the Corn Sample Market in 1808, for which he was paid £16.6.<sup>1</sup>

There appears to have been a definite link between Trotter holding the position of Old Dean of Guild on the Council and the receiving of large and lucrative public funeral commissions. Whilst Old Dean of Guild, Trotter was in charge of the funeral of Dr Adam (late Rector of the High School) in 1809, and that of the late Lord Provost in 1810. The only instances of Trotter coordinating public funerals for the Council are

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<sup>1</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 154, 29 March 1809-12 Oct. 1809, 13 Sept. 1809, p.357.



the above, coinciding with his term as Old Dean of Guild. The link between commission and position may be explained by the fact that the remit of the Dean of Guild and Old Dean of Guild on the Council was the overseeing of the City's churches, including such matters as the granting of burial grounds and the erection of funerary monuments, obviously remits relating to funerals. It is worth noting that the funeral of Dr Adam may have brought Trotter into contact with Francis Jeffrey, the Advocate and founder of the *Edinburgh Review*. Jeffrey was suggested to Trotter as a source of information on the deceased.<sup>2</sup> In 1812, Jeffrey was on the committee of the Faculty of Advocates who were to discuss the fitting out of the new library.<sup>3</sup> Although it cannot be known for sure that Trotter met with Jeffrey to discuss Dr Adam, or therefore that the Advocate was able to assist Trotter in gaining the library commission, this is still a useful illustration of the way in which the relatively small circle of Edinburgh society could potentially lead to favourable circumstances for a cabinet-maker such as Trotter.

Trotter's ability to gain Council commissions through his positions on the Council was not unique. In fact, the clear link between such positions and the receipt of commissions was, to a great extent, what made them so sought after. This meant that if there were a number of Councillors with the relevant skills to carry out a particular Council commission, estimates were taken in from each. For example, in August 1820, Trotter was asked to hand in an estimate for various articles of furniture for the

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<sup>2</sup> The funeral is discussed more fully in Chapter 8

<sup>3</sup> Gordon Brown, Iain, *Building for Books: The Architectural Evolution of the Advocates Library 1689-1925*, Aberdeen, 1989, p.89.

new classrooms and professors' retiring rooms of the College.<sup>4</sup> An estimate was also taken from Deacon Paton, an extraordinary Deacon on the Council.

It is interesting to note that Trotter was made Old Dean of Guild on the Council in 1809, a year after he had carried out work in the Dean of Guild's office. It may be that Trotter ingratiated himself to the Dean of Guild whilst carrying out this commission, although this cannot be proven. This illustrates the cyclical nature of political power and commission gaining. This cycle was exploited successfully not just by Trotter but by many other merchants / tradesmen in Edinburgh and elsewhere. This, combined with the fact that the Council controlled many of the city's institutions, led to a monopoly of the various trades by a privileged few.

Although some of Trotter's commissions appear to have been linked to specific Council positions held, others, such as the furnishing of the various public offices of the Council, do not seem to be linked to specific posts. The mere fact that Trotter was a member of the Council with the requisite skills for the job was enough to secure him the commissions. This was the privileged situation of all the merchants and tradesmen of the Council. This is illustrated by Trotter's large number of church commissions. It could easily be supposed that these commissions were linked to his position as Old Dean of Guild in 1809, the Dean of Guild and Old Dean of Guild's remit on the Council being the overseeing of Church affairs. However, Trotter's church commissions date from 1805 to 1826-7, i.e. commencing before and continuing after his time as Old Dean of Guild. It may be that Trotter was initially given such church

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<sup>4</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes vol. 181, 28 June 1820-17 Jan. 1821, 9 Aug. 1820, p.74. The fact that such a commission is mentioned in the Town Council Minutes rather than the College Commissioners' Minutes suggests that the work was considered as beyond the remit of the Commissioners, i.e. it was beyond the basic furnishing of the rooms that was entrusted to them.

commissions due simply to the fact that he was a Council member with the relevant skills. As he completed the work successfully, he appears (from the minutes) to have become the designated Council member to whom all such work was given.

A position on the Town Council led to Trotter's appointment to various Council committees. Whilst a Merchant Councillor, Trotter was on the Committee for the College and High school, which may have contributed to him being chosen two years later as the cabinet-maker who was to fit out a former Humanity classroom in the College as a museum.<sup>5</sup> As the Council were the Patrons of the College, they had the power to appoint workmen for such commissions. Other committees allowed Trotter the opportunity to cultivate relationships with a number of key players in Edinburgh society who could provide access to lucrative and high-profile commissions not directly connected to the Town Council. It is impossible to state as fact that Trotter's position on particular committees led to his gaining of *specific* commissions, but his eagerness to be appointed to such committees and their more active sub-committees indicates their effectiveness at furthering his own ends. At a meeting of the Improvements Committee, discussed in a Town Council Minute of the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 1825, Trotter (at this stage not a member of the Town Council, but poised to become Provost) sat along with George Cranstoun, the Dean of the Faculty of Advocates.<sup>6</sup> Trotter provided furniture for the library of the Faculty in 1818 and the firm was commissioned again in 1834 (after Trotter's death). Cranstoun was also a member of the committee of the Faculty appointed in 1812 to consider the fitting out of the

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<sup>5</sup> Estimates were taken in for this work, and Trotter's estimate was found to be lower than Francis Braidwood's. The choice of Trotter may therefore have been motivated by economics. However, the selection of Trotter as a candidate for the work may have been due to his high profile through his position on the Council.

<sup>6</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes vol. 193, 3 Aug. 1825-9 Nov. 1825, 31 Aug. 1825, p.127.

library.<sup>7</sup> This may have brought Trotter to his attention. Sitting on a committee with the Dean may or may not have led directly to the firm being chosen as cabinet-makers for the Faculty library in 1834, but such committees certainly kept Trotter's profile high in the minds of those with the power to influence the choice of cabinet-maker for their various institutions.

Trotter's time as Master of the Merchant Company also provided plenty of opportunities to sit on important committees. For example, after a meeting of the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 1820 on the subject of the state of St Giles' Cathedral, Trotter put himself forward as a member of the sub-committee who were to procure estimates for repairs.<sup>8</sup> The relevant Town Council minute notes that the meeting was attended by '...the Heads of the different Public Bodies, the Incorporations and others'.<sup>9</sup> As head of such an important public body, Trotter must have attended many similar meetings. This view is reinforced by Heron in his history of the Merchant Company. He remarks of the Company that:

It would appear to have been regarded as the prudent course that they should have early notice of and be consulted as to any important project of the Municipality.<sup>10</sup>

As with the committees already mentioned, it is not possible to pinpoint which committee positions held by Trotter led to his receiving specific commissions. The

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<sup>7</sup> Gordon Brown, Iain, *Op Cit*, p.89.

<sup>8</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 180, 19 Jan. 1820-21 June 1820, 21 June 1820, p.346.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.431.

<sup>10</sup> Heron, A., *The Merchant Company of Edinburgh – Its Rise and Progress*, Edinburgh 1903, p.106.

committees did, however, allow him to mingle with important figures, steer decisions to suit his own ends, and generally raise his profile in the eyes of potential clients.

The link between membership of the Merchant Company and the gaining of positions on the Town Council should not be overlooked. Although there were some positions, such as Merchant Councillor, to gain which one had to be a member of the Company, there was also an 'unofficial' link between the two bodies, the most important aspect of which is noted by Heron in his history of the Company when discussing the decret arbitral of 1583:

The happy precedent was thus formed, which has been from time to time followed, of the master's chair qualifying for promotion to the Civic Chair.<sup>11</sup>

Although the nature of Trotter's profession meant that it was necessary for him to join the Merchant Company rather than one of the Incorporated Trades, he appears to have taken advantage of the privileges that membership could bring in respect of the obtaining of merchants' positions on the Council and sitting on influential committees. It is interesting to note that he was made Provost six years after being made Master of the Company.

Throughout his working life, Trotter appears to have made a significant amount of money by completing work that had not been officially sanctioned by the Council. This appears to have been a liberty taken by many of the merchants and tradesmen on

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<sup>11</sup> Heron, *Op Cit*, p.21.

the Council. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 1807, one of the Bailies reported to the Council regarding the:

...vague way in which orders were given for carrying on Public Works, and the difficulty that often occurred in getting those accounts properly attested...<sup>12</sup>

This hints at the problem of work being completed without having been ordered. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1820, the First Bailie's Committee reported to the Council that work amounting to £545.7.10 had been carried out at various churches (only St George's is named individually), the College and the City Chambers. Of these, 'very few' had been supplied in accordance with the regulations for the giving of commissions.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 1821, an account was presented to the College Commissioners totalling £390.1.2 for furnishings for the Museum which Playfair claimed not to have ordered.<sup>14</sup> Trotter, and tradesmen in general, were obviously aware of the rules regulating the carrying out of commissions, but chose to ignore them in the interests of their own profits. Such flouting of the rules was able to occur due to the lack of financial safeguards within the Council system. The auditors of the Council's accounts were chosen from among the Council themselves, and as the Council was made up almost entirely of merchants and tradesmen, turning a blind eye was mutually beneficial. This corrupt and inefficient system was continued until the advent of Burgh Reform in the 1830s.

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<sup>12</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 148, 14 Jan. 1807-13 May 1807, 18 Feb. 1807, pp 114-115.

<sup>13</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 181, 28 June 1820-17 Jan. 1821, 12 Sept. 1820, p.167.

<sup>14</sup> College Trust Minute Book No.2, 1816-1828, 26 Feb. 1821.



Despite the Council's generally lax approach to the management of their finances, Trotter was not always given commissions without competitive estimates being taken in. In 1808, when the Humanity Classroom in the College was being fitted out for Dr Thomson's collection, the Council took estimates from Francis Braidwood as well from Trotter. This may be explained by the fact that the work required was of a different nature to that completed previously by Trotter for the Council. The fact that the work was being paid for out of the fund left by Dr Thomson for the care of the collection may also have made the Council more wary of simply handing over the work. The other instances of competitive estimates being taken in by the Council occur when the financial outlay was to be considerable. For example, in June 1810, Trotter and a 'Mr Brown' were asked to give in sealed estimates for work required in the College library, the work totalling £600.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, A.O. Turnbull and Trotter were asked to compete for the contract of the extended Museum in 1824, Turnbull's offer of £1067 being accepted by the Commissioners as the cheapest.<sup>16</sup> The fact that the Government grants for the completion of the College were running low at this point may also have been a contributing factor here. As a general rule, it appears that very large commissions were only handed out after competitive estimates had been sought, whereas small commissions were handed out on an *ad hoc* basis.

Those in charge of public buildings not connected to the Town Council appear to have controlled their finances more carefully. For example, it was noted at a meeting of the Directors of the George Street Assembly Rooms that:

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<sup>15</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 156, 9 May 1810-12 Sept. 1810, 13 June 1810, p.103.

<sup>16</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No.2, 1816-1828, 13 Dec. 1824, pp 422-423.

An Estimate for repairing the Sofas and Benches (had been) received from Mr. Cooper upholsterer in the Cowgate: Desired the Treasurer to apply to Mr Trotter for an Estimate for the same purpose.<sup>17</sup>

This estimate was taken in despite the fact that Trotter had worked extensively for the Assembly Rooms in previous years. The Directors may have preferred Trotter for the job before estimates were taken in, but this process of competition must have kept down the estimates. This was no doubt a priority for the Assembly Rooms, who gave much of their profits to charitable causes.

When considering the reasons behind Trotter's gaining of lucrative and high profile commissions, there are a number of factors unconnected with city politics which must be considered in order to gain a balanced view. The reputation that the Trotter family firm had built up in Edinburgh before William became its sole head should not be overlooked. In the case of the George Street Assembly Rooms and of the Advocates Library, Trotter's work had been preceded by work by the family firm. In October 1786, Young and Trotter provided sofas, benches, chairs, tables, footstools, doors, pedestals, slips, curtains and other sundries to the Assembly Rooms.<sup>18</sup> In 1796, they sent samples of patterned linen for slip covers for furniture, and an estimate for the fitting out of the ballroom.<sup>19</sup> A 1774 inventory of furnishings in the Advocates Library (in its old premises in Parliament House) included a list of furniture provided for a 'new room'. One piece mentioned was a '...fine mahogany library table with 3 drawers fitted with accommodations for writing and 8 plain drawers, with panneld feet & brackets 8ft x 4ft 9', the top covered with green cloth. This was provided by

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<sup>17</sup> National Archives, GD1/377/6, Minute Book, Assembly Rooms, George Street, 1817, 22 Dec. 1821.

<sup>18</sup> Bamford, *Op Cit*, p.117.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*.

Young and Trotter.<sup>20</sup> Such previous commissions may have motivated the Assembly Rooms and the Advocates Library to employ the same firm when new work became necessary.

An important factor in Trotter's selection as cabinet-maker for the College of Edinburgh appears to have been the esteem in which he was held by W.H. Playfair. At an early stage of the 'new' College development, in June 1818, the architect reported to the College Commissioners that he wished to '...enter into a contract with Mr Trotter for the joiner work of the Cabinets of the Museum...'<sup>21</sup> The influence of Professor Jameson may be a contributing factor here (this is discussed in more detail below), but the total control of Playfair over the design of the College, as evidenced by his detailed plans, suggests that he would have to have been convinced of Trotter's suitability himself in order to select him. It is interesting to note that Playfair did not suggest that estimates be taken in by the Commissioners, indicating that he was absolutely sure of his choice.

It seems reasonable to assert that Playfair also suggested Trotter as an appropriate cabinet-maker to the Speculative Society when the time came for them to fit up their rooms within the College area. The absence of the sub-committee minutes pertaining to the arrangement of furniture provision for the new rooms means that this assertion cannot be proven beyond doubt. However, in a general society minute of November 1818, '...the thanks of the Society were unanimously voted to Mr Playfair, architect, for his exertions with regard to finishing the new apartments', which suggests that

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<sup>20</sup> Gordon Brown, Iain, *Building for Books: The Architectural Evolution of the Advocates Library 1689-1925*, Aberdeen, 1989, p.53. I have not managed to locate this inventory in the archives of the Faculty of Advocates.

<sup>21</sup> E.C.A., 2/1-2/97, College Commissioners' Minutes, 1815-1818, 2 June 1818.

Playfair was closely involved in the fitting up of the rooms from beginning to end.<sup>22</sup> Later on in the development of the College, Playfair still appears to have preferred Trotter for the necessary cabinet-work. A Standing Committee (of the College Commissioners) Minute of July 1826 notes that:

‘Mr Playfair having stated that it was more in Mr Trotter’s way to give plans of furniture for the Entrance Lobby of the Principal’s Chambers and Senate Hall, he had as ordered some time ago procured these.’<sup>23</sup>

Although it may be suggested that Trotter’s own abilities (discussed below in more detail) had a part to play in his selection here, it still appears that Playfair held Trotter as a favourite.

These examples of Playfair putting Trotter forward as the ideal cabinet-maker for various jobs are not isolated incidents. The architect appears to have given advice to his employers regarding workmen in general. For example, in a letter of the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 1831 to the Earl of Minto regarding his church, Playfair suggests that ‘Buchan’ should be given the job of preparing the walls, as he ‘...lays on size most admirably.’<sup>24</sup> Robert Buchan of George Street was the best-known painter and decorator of the period, indicating that Playfair was only willing to suggest the finest craftsmen to his clients.<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, Buchan’s name appears in the College Commissioners’ minutes, as having completed various commissions in the College. For example, in January 1820, he handed in an estimate of £195 for the painting of the

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<sup>22</sup> Speculative Society, Speculative Society Minutes vol. V, 1815-1825, 24 Nov. 1818, p.153.

<sup>23</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No.2, 1816-1828, 20 July 1826, p.482.

<sup>24</sup> N.L.S., MS13321 Minto Local Affairs, f.163, W.H. Playfair to Earl of Minto, 29 Dec. 1831.

<sup>25</sup> Fraser, A.G., *The Building of Old College: Adam, Playfair & the University of Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, 1989 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), p.201.

Upper Gallery of the Museum, which was accepted as the lowest.<sup>26</sup> It is unclear in this instance whether it was Buchan's own reputation or a recommendation by Playfair that brought him to the attention of the Commissioners, but the influence of the architect should not be discounted.

The recommendation of workmen appears to have been carried out more widely than just by Playfair. Trotter himself seems to have surreptitiously recommended a particular Inspector of Works for the building of the High School in Edinburgh. A Town Council Minute of the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 1826 includes a report from the Committee for Revising the High School Contract, which included Trotter (then also Provost). The minute notes that:

The Committee are of opinion that they should authorise Mr Hamilton to appoint the person to be Inspector of Works who was foreman of Kinfauns...<sup>27</sup>

Although this is presented as a committee decision, it seems likely that it was Trotter who suggested the Inspector. Trotter provided furniture for Kinfauns Castle in 1825, and was obviously a driving force in the committee, being both the member who signed the report and the Convener of the Sub-Committee who were to attend to matters relating to the building.

The position of the firm under Trotter as 'favourites' of Playfair is paralleled in the late 1830s and 1840s (after Trotter's death) by the firm being used extensively by the architect James Gillespie Graham for the provision of Gothic architectural

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<sup>26</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No.2, 1816-1828, 8 Jan. 1820, p.213.

<sup>27</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 198, 26 July 1826-29 Nov. 1826, 11 Nov. 1826, p.296.

woodwork.<sup>28</sup> When the traveller Thomas Froghall Dibdin visited the firm's workshops in c1838, he had been given a note of introduction by Gillespie Graham, in order that he might view the oak carving which they were producing to the architect's designs for Heriot's Hospital.<sup>29</sup> It can be seen, then, that such networks of recommendation could bring a competent cabinet-maker such as Trotter to the attention of a wider audience, with the added cachet of being associated with a well-respected architect.

Another major factor which should not be overlooked is Trotter's excellent business sense. His first commission for the College is a useful example of this. As well as submitting a lower estimate than Braidwood, Trotter also provided a personal and attentive service. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 1808, he wrote to William Tennant, the College Bailie, regarding the alterations necessary to the specifications in his estimate:

In conformity to your directions I have made an accurate survey of the Museum in the College and consulted with professor Jameson...<sup>30</sup>

Such personal service appears not to have been provided by Braidwood, who, from his letter to Tennant, seems to have made adjustments to his specifications without visiting the College.<sup>31</sup> Trotter's quality of service ensured that he would receive future commissions in the 'new' Museum, which was under discussion (as part of the 'new College) at this time.

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<sup>28</sup> Gow, Ian, 'New Light on Late Trotter', *Country Life*, 11 August 1988, pp 100-103, p.101.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Froghall Dibdin, in Bamford, F., *A Dictionary of Edinburgh Wrights and Furniture Makers, 1660-1840*, Furniture History, 1983, p.115.

<sup>30</sup> E.C.A., 6/1-6/25, Papers of the College Commissioners, Papers regarding Dr Thomson's Museum, 23 June, 1808.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.



The efficacy of Trotter's approach can be seen in Jameson's report to the College Commissioners regarding the 'new' Museum, included in a Minute of the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1818. The Professor puts the case for employing Trotter very strongly, stating that the only plan that should be proposed is:

'...to select a person possessing the requisite talent and skill, and whose means are so ample as to allow him the advantages of the selection of the best materials and the employment of the most experienced workmen. In Edinburgh, the only person who combines all these requisites is Mr Trotter in Prince's (sic) Street.'<sup>32</sup>

As a result of this report, the Commissioners decided that it would be unwise to put the collection at risk by having the cases made by competition estimates '...altho' this might be the means of saving a few pounds...'<sup>33</sup> This implies that Trotter was not the cheapest option as cabinet-maker. His low offer for the early Museum cabinets (in 1808), combined with a good level of service, allowed him to supply a less competitive estimate at a later stage, safe in the knowledge that he would be chosen for the job. The quality of his service with regard to the early Museum may have motivated Jameson to recommend him to Playfair whilst the plans for fitting up the 'new' Museum were being drawn up (although this cannot be ascertained for certain, as there is no extant correspondence between the professor and the architect on this subject).

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<sup>32</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No.2, 1816-1828, 12 June 1818, p.146.

<sup>33</sup> E.C.A., 2/1-2/97, College Commissioners' Minutes, 1815-1818, 12 June 1818.

The quote from Jameson above also highlights the fact that the scale of Trotter's business allowed him to complete large and lucrative commissions. This was particularly useful in 1824, when the contract for the extended Museum had been given to A.O. Turnbull. Turnbull could not provide a large enough quantity of seasoned timber to carry out the work, whereas Trotter was able to write to Playfair on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1824 stating that:

...the Oak intended to have been appropriated to the cabinets in the Galleries of the College has been in my wood-yard for upwards of 3 years, and some of it not less than 5 years, which is a circumstance of considerable importance in work of such a nature and of such extent.<sup>34</sup>

The fact that Trotter was one of the few, if not the only, cabinet-makers in Edinburgh who had the ability to complete such large commissions, meant that he did not have to provide such competitive estimates, and hence could maximise his profits.

Another example of Trotter being singled out as the only appropriate cabinet-maker in the city for a certain job is given by a Standing Committee (of the College Commissioners) Minute of the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1826. The Minute declares that:

'Mr Playfair having stated that it was more in Mr Trotter's way to give plans of furniture for the Entrance lobby of the Principal's Chambers and Senate Hall, he had as ordered some time ago procured these.'<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No.2, 1816-1828, 23 Dec. 1824, p.442.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 1 March 1826, p.458.

Although this statement is less emphatic than Professor Jameson's quoted above, there is still a definite sense that Trotter is seen as the only cabinet-maker who could be entrusted with the work.<sup>36</sup>

Trotter also appears to have had useful business connections which may have assisted in his gaining of large commissions. For example, a College Commissioners' Minute of the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 1919 regarding the glass for the Museum cabinets explains that Trotter had applied to the British Plate Glass Manufactory. The glass should have cost £1291.11.5, but '...in consequence of Mr Trotter's exertions, and the magnitude of the order...' the glass was procured for £1092.19.10.<sup>37</sup> Trotter's connections also proved useful with regard to the procuring of curtains for the Senate Hall of the College. A College Commissioners' Minute of the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 1823 includes a report by the Standing Committee, which states that:

...since their Minute refusing to furnish curtains to the Senate Hall, part of the Hangings used in the Parliament House, on the occasion of the Banquet given to His Majesty had been procured on moderate terms...<sup>38</sup>

The number of commissions with which Trotter was simultaneously involved allowed him to provide useful extra services such as the procurement of unwanted curtains from one commission for the benefit of another.

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<sup>36</sup> The influence of Playfair on this decision should not be overlooked, the architect preferring Trotter for work on the College generally (see above).

<sup>37</sup> E.C.A., College Trust Minute Book No.2, 1816-1828, 4 Oct 1819, pp 196-197.

<sup>38</sup> E.C.A., 2/1-2/97, College Commissioners' Minutes, 1815-1818, 9 May 1823.

Trotter's efficiency must also have been a major selling point in the eyes of potential employers. Whereas the College Commissioners' Minutes are littered with references to another contractor, A.O. Turnbull, not completing work on time, Trotter appears to have consistently met his deadlines. This efficiency is particularly noticeable with regard to the fitting up of the Assembly Rooms for the visit of George IV. Mudie, in his account of the Visit, states that:

'Mr. Trotter was charged with the immediate execution of the whole arrangements; and the success of that gentleman in overcoming the many difficulties presented by the shortness of time, was such as to excite the astonishment of those who witnessed the result of his unexampled exertions.'<sup>39</sup>

Such a quality must have added to his appeal in the eyes of potential employers.

As can be seen from the above observations, there were a number of factors that potentially influenced those with the ability to hand commissions to Trotter. Many commissions were awarded to him as a result of a complex of influences, rather than simply being based on one particular factor. For example, Trotter's work in the 'new' Museum at the College. The fact that Trotter had completed work for the previous incarnation of the Museum, and for the rest of the College, to a highly satisfactory standard meant that he was put forward as the man for the job by Professor Jameson. Playfair's support of him (perhaps influenced by Jameson) also strengthened his position as a candidate. Although Trotter was not a member of the Council during the

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<sup>39</sup> Mudie, R., *A Historical Account of His Majesty's Visit to Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1822, p.218.

initial phase of preparation of the 'new' Museum, his previous positions had secured him a number of Council commissions, which continued after he had left the Council (albeit temporarily). The Council's involvement in College affairs meant that their support held a lot of weight with the College Commissioners.

It appears that commissions for the public buildings not directly connected to the Council, such as the George Street Assembly Rooms and the Faculty of Advocates, were gained by Trotter less through political influence than through his firm's own business and cabinet-making skills. In the case of both buildings, work had been completed previously by the family firm before William Trotter's time as head of the company, and this, combined with competitive estimates, quality workmanship and speed of execution, ensured a steady stream of work throughout Trotter's working life. However, Trotter's involvement in city affairs through the Council, Merchant Company and various committees may have raised his profile in the eyes of useful contacts. The idea of Trotter's own skills carrying more weight than his political clout in the eyes of certain institutions is particularly interesting with regard to the Speculative Society. In the first instance of Trotter providing furniture for them, in late 1818 / early 1819, the influence of Playfair and the Town Council may have been felt. However, the society continued to use Trotter, calling on his services in 1820 and again at the very end of his life.<sup>40</sup> As the Speculative was a private society, this suggests that after the initial provision of their rooms, they were left to make choices based on the merits of craftsmen rather than on their political connections.

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<sup>40</sup> Speculative Society, Speculative Society Bills, No.25, July and Nov. 1820, and Bamford, F., *A Dictionary of Edinburgh Wrights and Furniture Makers, 1660-1840*, Furniture History, 1983, p.121.

It would be easy to claim that Trotter was not always employed due to his political connections, as he received a number of commissions during periods when he was not a member of the Council. This would, however, be too simplistic a view. The network of contacts that he built up during his periods in power would not necessarily have ceased to be in play simply because he was no longer on the Council. This network is not easy to unpick, due to the fact that corruption may have been widespread, but it was also surreptitious. A veneer of propriety coated every decision of the Council, the various committees, and the governing bodies of the city's institutions. For example, when Trotter held his various Council positions, including that of Provost, he was still noted in Town Council Minutes relating to his commissions as 'William Trotter', with no indication of his office. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 1826, the Council's Chamberlain was authorised to pay £112.10 '...to William Trotter for Upholstery work at St Mary's Church per Estimate.'<sup>41</sup> At this time, Trotter was Lord Provost. Such a convention was obviously designed to make unclear the connection between the work given out by the Council and those people who were its members. On the rare occasions when the connection is made explicit, the work mentioned is on a very small scale. For example, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of January 1807 'Councilor Trotter' was authorised '...to furnish a cushion for the elders seat in Old Greyfriars Church'.<sup>42</sup> Such an attempt to give an air of propriety to a corrupt system can be seen in the Town Council Minutes relating to the annual elections. Various Acts of Parliament were read out before each stage of the process, including 'An Act for the more effectually preventing of bribery and Corruption in the Election of Members to serve in Parliament'.<sup>43</sup> Such Acts become laughable when contrasted with the actual mechanisms of election.

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<sup>41</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 196, 10 Nov. 1825-8 March 1826, 8 March 1826, p.410.

<sup>42</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 148, 14 Jan. 1807-13 May 1807, 21 Jan. 1807, pp 49-50.

<sup>43</sup> E.C.A., SL1/1, Town Council Minutes, vol. 185, 11 Sept. 1822-5 Feb. 1823, 1 Oct. 1822, p.73.



It is perhaps more accurate to assert that Trotter thrived due to a careful balance of political manoeuvring and sound business sense. His political career led to him receiving a number of important / lucrative commissions, either as a direct result of the particular positions he held, or more subtly through the opportunity it provided to sit on committees with various powerful and useful figures. The Council's corrupt system of elections and accountability made it open to such manipulation. However, it was Trotter's business acumen that allowed him to successfully execute these commissions, and thereby perpetuate his success. The scale of his business allowed him to supply large quantities of materials for sizeable commissions, and to supply the full range of sundries required by a potential employer. He was also able to employ skilled workmen who could complete work to a high standard. This level of professionalism led to financial security, which meant that Trotter could hand in competitive estimates to new potential employers.

Trotter, then, undoubtedly used his political influence to raise his profile in Edinburgh and secure various commissions. However, he does not appear to have rested on his laurels. His sound business sense and quality of workmanship allowed him to cement the relationships he had formed through his political connections. In this way, he was able to sustain working relationships with various important institutions throughout his working life.

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The Commissioners of the  
College Museum  
To Willm. Trotter

1819  
Feb 7.

11 Oak Cabinets containing  
11 broad and 5 narrow shelves  
enclosed with bound glazed  
doors of 5 panes the under  
cabinet filled with 111 drawers  
enclosed with doors—

2 D<sup>o</sup>. I<sup>o</sup>. with shelves in  
the glass case and 28 drawers  
in the under part each under-  
lid with bound pannell'd  
doors on close plinths—

11 D<sup>o</sup>. I<sup>o</sup>. for end of Museum  
the under part containing 111  
drawers each—

12 D<sup>o</sup>. I<sup>o</sup>. containing 111 drawers  
each enclosed with bound pannell'd  
doors—

Car. forward—

10 (S): (P): in 3 parts  
each for Galleries of Large  
Museum containing 7 Shelves  
each enclosed with 2 bound  
glazed doors—

7 (L): (P): in 3 parts each  
at as p. Estimate No 569

12 Glass cases with circular tops  
to fit niches of room contain-  
ing 3 narrow and 11 broad  
shelves—

4 Oak cabinets for recesses in  
each side containing 4 broad  
and 5 narrow shelves incline  
with bound glazed doors &c.  
to match large cabinets—

An Elegant Octagon Table of  
fine Mahogany in a massive  
pedestal finished with dark  
panels and richly carved  
ornaments with a glass case for  
the top of the carved & gilded  
and supported on pillars for  
circle of room—

(Carved) -

569

2 Large round  
Tables massive  
and massive  
deep rounded  
mills round  
carved cast  
gilding. in  
9 wide. sup-  
by 3/4 ft—

at as p. 1st Part of

2 oval at  
top round  
cloth in  
hall put—

2 Glass case  
battery of  
part made  
Cases incline  
milled door  
Museum the  
and round

£ 569 " "

Pro<sup>to</sup> Ju

2 Large and handsome Mahogany  
 Tables supported on 4 richly carved  
 and massive tripes finished with  
 deep mouldings and sunk pan-  
 -nels surrounded by open fully  
 carved cases for glass fronted in  
 gilding - each table 14 ft. 6" by 14 ft.  
 9" wide. see originally estimate 14 ft.  
 by 3 1/2 ft.

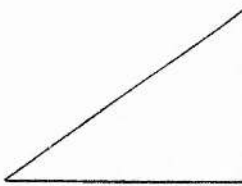
£ 569 " " 569 " "

At as J<sup>r</sup>. Estimate by £ 408 " "  
 1<sup>st</sup> Part of No 2

408 " "

2 Small Mahogany Tables the  
 tops covered with fine crimson  
 cloth on square pedestals in  
 half feet

2 Glass cases for the side  
 gallery of long room the under  
 part made to receive insects  
 Cases enclosed with green pan-  
 -nelled doors & glass doors of  
 Walnut the backs framed  
 and covered with canvas



£ 569 " "

and J<sup>r</sup>. £ 977 " "

Pro'p

977

1. Large Mahogany Table with  
glass case on the top with inside  
-ing under top and astragal  
formed on the bottom of each  
supported in front by 12 brass  
in brass resting on square  
blocks nicely finished and  
carved.

2. Long Cabinets with glass  
cases on top containing 36  
Manuscript drawers each finish  
ed with a brass label plate  
and 2 knobs inclined by 6  
brass drawers.

4. Handsome Mahogany  
Chairs carved backs the seats  
stuffed in best red Morocco  
finished with silk gimp.

2. Yellow Blinds with pat-  
-ent screwing for 3 Venetian  
Shutters of upper Museum

18 yds 1/4 Braid for floor  
Crown

at as J. Estimate in £ 207 " " No. 2 p. 2

Carved for £ 1184 " "

6. Mahogany  
round back  
round end  
carved legs  
with fine

3. Walnut  
the tops in  
crimson clo  
finished  
for standing

3. Walnut  
by 25 inches

228 3/4 of 1/2

70. Brass

5. Large M.  
holland in  
for High M.

at as J.

12. Hand-  
carved backs  
best red m.  
silk gimp  
for Estimate

977

5

Pric<sup>d</sup> Ju

1184

6 Mahogany Tables for large room with pannelled ends & rounded ends on 11 massive carved legs each, the top covered with fine crimson cloth

3 Small Mahogany tables the tops covered with fine crimson cloth supported on pannelled turned pedestals for standing in the Windows

3 Small Glass Cases 25 inches by 25 inches & 18 inches high

228  $\frac{3}{4}$  of  $\frac{3}{4}$  Price for covers

70 Brass Claw rods & Balls

5 Large Window Shades of holland with patent secondary for High Museum

at as yr. Estimate £254 16 6

12 Handsome Mahogany Chairs carved backs the seats stuffed in best red morocco & finished with gold fringe

37 16

See Estimate No 3

292 12 6

207

1184

Carried forward - 1476 12 6



8 Polished Mirror plates for the large center table as as fr. Estimate					1176 12 6
36 pieces patent plated glass for the large oblong table	23	11	3		
12 pieces of crown glass in frames for the above table see Estimate No 4	14	11	11	29	15 1

Not Estimated

<del>Workman's setting up cabinets</del>	<del>35</del>	<del>2</del>	<del>11</del>		
2 taking off casing & putting in doors of cabinets removing boards & putting plates into cabinets	21	10	2		
80 <sup>th</sup> in Adv. Brass Label Plates	29	12	9		
Altering pillars of bases & papering drawers & setting up tables	16	10	6		
3 11 <sup>th</sup> 3 in screws			3		
2 1/2 - 2 1/2 do			2	8	
3 " 2 1/2 do			3		
2 " 2 do			1		
1 hundred Nails			1		
3 " 2 <sup>nd</sup> flooring do	72		1	10	
2 " 7 in brass 72. 3 h. 4 in do	3		2		
24 1/2 Linn Cartridge paper	3	13	6		
Carriage fee	107	44	138	77	

Altering the  
and covering  
finished with  
Red paint  
Mirror plates  
30 lb. iron  
shelves  
2 Gips large  
7  
Single and  
Nails in  
sand paper  
Red paint  
Hanging year  
Reflooring  
Glass plates  
Plate glass  
144 small  
146 (2)  
25 1/2 feet  
the 2 tables  
Large Mirror  
3 Mirrors  
Ging for 2  
2  
Making  
the stairs  
80 y.  
40 hands

	117	10	12	6
			32	:
25	10	3		
4	4	10		
			29	13
35	7	11		
21	10	2		
29	12	9		
16	10	6		
"	3	"		
"	2	8		
"	3	"		
"	1	"		
"	1	"		
"	1	10		
3	2	"		
3	13	6		
107	44	138	77	

[illegible]

8		Est for	L 228	11	9	1538	77
Workmen putting up Cases & Cabinets taking down the lining of bedroom and large parlour			13	7	9		
ing in Cork boards							
3 1/4 lbs paper for Cases			2	8	10		
1 1/2 lbs Blue Cartridge paper			2	3	6		
12 Square Mould Iron brackets for supporting shelves			3	5			
2 Iron shelves 1/2 2 do Doors 1/2				5			
2 1/2 Green Glass headed screws 1/2				2	11		
Workmanship removing Cases and altering and putting on doors and casing			2	1			
2 Doz Bluece Black				2			
<del>2 do do 2 do do</del>				<del>2</del>	<del>4</del>		
<del>2 do do 2 do do</del>				<del>3</del>	<del>3</del>		
New for 2 do horns					9		
Repairing Locks					16		
A set of 3 Wheel fastors					29		
Glazing 2 Glass Cases 10.6.6							
9 do			13	17			
Glazing large table				3	6		
Glazing 2 Cabinets			3	15			
					269	1810	
					1808	65	

Examined.

W. H. P. J. J. J.

The Estimates Nos 1, 2, 3 & 4, above alluded to were approved of by the Commissioners or by the Museum Committee. The work not estimated was absolutely necessary to complete the room and was done with the sanction of the Committee.

W. H. P.

The Commissioners of the  
College Museum,  
To  
Willm. Trotter

1894			
Feb 1/94	An American wood stand on cast- iron feet with top and bottom stretched and blackwood board lining, in weights	11	15 -
	Changing a large board w <sup>th</sup> pulleys in Prof. Jamieson's room	11	2 -
	A Mahogany glass case for a Model	1	10 -
	A do do do	1	10 -
	A do do do	1	10 -
	A do do do	1	7 6 -
	Two extra sized pairs crown glass square plates for do -	2	6 9 -
	2 Glass cases to match our old one the back framed & canvased with 3 glazed doors -	23	10 -
	A small do -	8	15 -
	3 Glass cases to match old ones for upper gallery with framed backs canvased & papered (at £8.15)	26	5 -
	2 Glazed doors for old cases - 78/6	7	17 -
	Fitting the covers of 5 glass cases	1	8 -
	Taking down old cases making new mouldings repairing & fitting up -	28	17 -
	Jan. 1/94	£	111 - -

Wm. J. W.

C III

Repairing Old Locks —		9	
6 Keys furnished work for 3 of them			
and fitting 35 Old locks to 2 —	1	9	6
6 new locks for Old Cans —	2	2	—
Nails and screws —		1	4
A Circular Cabinet with glass case			
to lay over top with 11 round handles	8	15	—
doors to contain your case of drawers			
2 Glass Cans for laying on the top of			
Cabinets in upper gallery with 7	6	6	—
glazed hinged flaps			
6 cleaning cases and setting up, alter-			
ing & putting up shelves & glass cases	6	19	6
11 Large Mahogany Glass Cases for			
laying on the tops of the side			
shelves and lower museum glass	43	10	—
a best common glass —			
A Wainscot glass case in 9 parts			
with panels inside the upper door			
glazed with best common glass the			
under doors board and panelled	117		—
enclosing drawers finished with pilaster			
cornice and close plinth —			
2 Mahogany Tables inside on the			
top with green scarlet cloth on them	17	10	—
2 pedestal stand —			
3 Strong tables on 4 turned legs			
each for under Museum, for painting	9	9	—
3 hardwood Tables on 4 turned			
legs —	13	5	6
Case for —	337	87	

9 framed  
 3 thick flint  
 and concrete  
 and millin  
 a black head  
 in the side  
 4 Mahogany  
 racks in car  
 close plinth  
 9 Boards  
 in clasp ro  
 A frame  
 194 feet  
 6 Drawers  
 2 hemp  
 2 do  
 2 do  
 3 Wainscot  
 White Musc  
 Lower Musc  
 Making (art  
 and London  
 42 y. 4  
 12 - 12  
 411 y. 12  
 Mason's work  
 with lead

(Seduced Article)



		3		Bd <sup>t</sup> for		£337 8 7	
9 framed boards 3.2 1/2 long 2.4 in broad & 3/4 thick flush pannell on the one side and covered over with cork 1/2 thick and milled round the edges with a black lead for exhibiting inside apart in the side room.						11	2 6
11 Mahogany fly table milled rails on carved turned pillars and class plate						13	18
9 Boards 2.4 x 2.4 for Glass case in Clap room.						2	3
2 frame for supporting a large Turk.							13 6
94 1/2 ft Black Beeding						1	11 3
6 Draw handles for Old Cases							7
2 Kemp Door Mat							
2 Do 1/3 2 Do 3/4						1	5 6
2 Do 4/4							9
5 Wainscot Plinths filled with White Muslin for under sashes of Lower Museum						5	11 6
Making Carpet for principle Hall and Landings							18
42 yd 1/4 Kemp Carpeting						7	7
120 Berbering							
411 Large Black Hair Rugs						6	1
411 Yr. Wrap Batts							12 10
Mason joining in Batts into Stair with lead							19
						£390	1 2
Subduct Article Marked +							13 6
						£389	7 8
9 of them							
2						1	9 6
						2	2
						1	4
glass case and pannell						8	15
1 drawers							
the top of							
with 2						6	6
2 63/							
9 up, allow						6	19 6
9 glass cases							
cases for							
side							
glazed						43	10
2 63/6							
in 9 parts							
upper doors							
glass the							
hemmed						117	
with pillars							
on the							
th on them						17	10
2 63/6							
and legs							
for painting						9	9
63/							
Mason							
2 63/6						13	3 6
2 63/6						£337	8 7



1820

(O)  
- Edinburgh

The Hon<sup>ble</sup> the Commissioners  
for the College  
To William Taitlee

1820

Dec <sup>r</sup>	6 frames covered with canvas & papered and size painted for blinds of windows in Prof <sup>r</sup> Leslie's Lab <sup>r</sup> Room	24/9	8	6	6
July	Preparing walls with size for papering in Prof <sup>r</sup> Brewster's room		1	9	11
	<del>Preparing walls with size for papering in Prof<sup>r</sup> Brewster's room</del>	<del>24/9</del>	<del>15</del>	<del>"</del>	<del>"</del>
1821	Wooden	09	3	2	1
For the Museum					
Nov	A Glap case with hinged tops 3 frames in each the bottom framed in 4 panes flush within		5	7	6
1822	Repairing blinds		"	1	6
June	6 of Cord	2	"	1	"
Sept	Repairing doors of Glap case putting cloth on all the joints of doors		1	7	"
	585 feet Black Moulding	2	4	7	6
	Repairing inside of Glap cases & lining them with cloth putting up blinds & laying carpets & making up floor cover		14	4	2
	7/8 of 3/4 fine brown cloth	11/4	"	14	"
	38 - fine fawn D <sup>o</sup>	14	2	8	"
	forward	4	46	19	2

1822	2	End of	46	192	1823	
Septm.	12 Sheets Madding	24	12	-	Alum	At Window Cor
	13 3/4 Grey Druggist for stain	4	2	12		2 black an
	3 Hanks sewing silk	1	1	6		how rays Ma
	112 3/4 Grey Druggist for Coat room	19	7	19		another Marden
	5 Hanks silk	1	2	6		above with M
	18 Topalls for Blinds	1	18	-		making 3 M
	Repairing wood fixing 2 Mardons	"	3	"		Room and re
	A patch fastener for stain case Marden	"	1	3		beardst. Clth
	<del>8 1/2 Hanks silk and 199</del>			6		Making 2 ft
	An oblong Mahogany table on pillars and 4 chairs needed on strong brass pocket castors		11	6		two Rooms
	A Mahogany Ottoman with canvas rugs and nicely tufted with a border from Mattress covered with red Red Morocco finished with silk gimp		23	10		66 1/4 3 1/4 M
	on tuft					12 Hanks silk
	Making slips for cars		2	17		Fitting bindin
	50 yd Mohaw linen	1/6	3	15		quadr halt a
						113 3/4 19 1/4 A
						11 1/2 - 3/4 2
						19 1/2 - 3/4 2
						19 1/2 - 3/4 2
						19 1/2 - 3/4 2
						2 Covers of
						loose for lathe
						Repairing a
						2 Blau and
	24 Large strong Mahogany Chairs broad spinnable top with slat seats tuft in back stating finished with silk gimp		42	"		
	2 Mahogany D <sup>o</sup> to match	2 35	5	"		
	An oblong Mahogany table on strong American wood pillars legs and 2 bleptio ends to join to the square table		19	3		
	A Mahogany decoration from back table		2	18		
	2 Mahogany hot stands with 12 Prop branches	17 1/2	7	7		
	forward		177	"	9	

At Window Cor  
2 black an  
how rays Ma  
another Marden  
above with M  
making 3 M  
Room and re  
beardst. Clth  
Making 2 ft  
two Rooms  
66 1/4 3 1/4 M  
12 Hanks silk  
Fitting bindin  
quadr halt a  
113 3/4 19 1/4 A  
11 1/2 - 3/4 2  
19 1/2 - 3/4 2  
19 1/2 - 3/4 2  
19 1/2 - 3/4 2  
2 Covers of  
loose for lathe  
Repairing a  
2 Blau and

Mr  
Now Making a fl  
11 1/8 3 1/4 M  
2 Hanks silk  
Putting listin  
6 7 Listin "

The Jan 446 192 1823		The forward 177 9	
for Blank	4 2 12 -	At Window Cornice with turned ends painted black and scarlet with upstitching lion rays Prackets Window hooks also another Window Cornice to match the above with Prackets Window Hooks and making 3 Window Curtains for Senate Room and room off 2 <sup>d</sup> of your Council Chm.	6 6
for Oak room	7 19 4	Making 2 floor Covers for these two Rooms	16 6
for Windows	3 3 -	66 1/4 yd 1/4 Mixed Dugget	12 8 5
case Window	1 2 -	12 Wanky silk	6
for table on	11 6	Putting binding slaying matting in guard hall and room off 2 <sup>d</sup>	1 18 9
needed on strong	23 10 -	115 1/4 yd 1/4 Royal Matting	4 2 -
with canvas		11 1/2 - 3/4 c 1/4 3 1/2 1/4 D <sup>o</sup>	2 15 -
with a border		19 1/2 - 3/4 c 3/4 13 1/4 3/4 D <sup>o</sup>	2 14 4
with the Red		19 1/2 - 3/4 c 1/4 24 Web	1 17 8
with green		17 1/2 - 3/4 c 1/4 19 Web	13 7
	2 57 6	2 Covers of Green Cloth to hang over for tables	4 5 10
	1/11 3 15 -	Repairing a Chair furnished and foot	3
		2 Blue and White Chambers vases	7 -
any Chairs			
slay seats	42 -		
needed with			
(35)			
to table on	5 -		
pillow legs			
soon to the	19 3 -		
from back	2 18 6		
with 12 Prop	77 -		
(37)			
forward	177 9		





Pro J <sup>r</sup>	£218	8
with patent	4	11 6
in pawn colour		14
newly		12 4
the furnished		2 5 9
Druggist one		5 9
4 of the Druggist		3 4 9
		2
		1 10
Brown linen		11
<del>1 Brown</del>		
<del>covered with</del>		
19	2	2
10 with patent	4	17 6
10		3 6
and with		1 15
mounting for		7
linos		7 5 1
ing		1 8 3
from broke		1 17 6
forward -	£251	13 7

5	Pro J <sup>r</sup>	£251	13 7
1822	Nov	Covering a table and 2 desk frames	
1823	Nov	with green cloth	1 16
		Covering a desk and table with fine	
		brunhow cloth	1 9 6
		An overall slip of brown linen	
		for table	12 2
		20 7 1/4 super carpeting	4 11
		41 large trap stair rods containing	
		41 1/2 feet	2 8 9
1822	Dec.	Dr. Ritchie	
1823	Nov	Covering table with fine green	
		cloth	13 6
		Covering a desk and a table with	
		fine crimson cloth	1 9 6
		An overall slip of brown linen for	
		table	12 2
		19 7 1/4 super carpeting	4 5 6
		40 large trap stair rods containing	
		16 1/2 feet	19 3
		The Principals Room	
		4 Mahogany Grecian sofa high	
		scrolls back and ends nicely stuffed	
		with bordered hair equal in hair	14 15
		seating upholstered with morocco finished	
		with pink quip	
		2 Down pillows in hair seating	
			2 7
		forward -	£287
			11 11

6  
 Pro<sup>d</sup> 287 11 11  
 A Mahogany scroll back easy chair  
 round stuff with bordered hair cushion  
 in hair seating 6 16 6  
 16 strong Mahogany chairs seats  
 stuff in hair seating 28  
 2 elbow D<sup>o</sup> to match 5  
 A handsome Mahogany writing  
 table with 10 drawers & writing board 15 11 6  
 in each corner drawer  
 A Mahogany writing table on  
 short hollow legs 4 10 -  
 A Mahogany dwarf wardrobe with  
 drawers in center and bound paneled  
 doors 13 2 6  
 A Mahogany commode with  
 stand with cupboard & drawers  
 under 4 7 6

1823  
 Nov  
 Slops of fine  
 Dicks  
 3 1/2 y 4 1/4

Altering a  
 hings  
 4 1/2 y 4 1/4 sup  
 2 Prap stain  
 An oval pl

Room off D<sup>o</sup>  
 A Pembroke table with a drawer 2 8 6  
 6 American wood Chairs with  
 seats stuff in hair seating 24  
 2 elbow D<sup>o</sup> to match 3 3

D<sup>o</sup>  
 16 y 4 1/4 sup  
 2 Prap stain

Dr. Brewster's room  
 Cleaning up 2 pulpits putting brass  
 binding on D<sup>o</sup> and covering with  
 cloth 1 6 -  
 18 y Prap binding 4 1/3 1/2 doz Prap stools 3 17 7  
 14 - Colman's cloth 2 1/4 7 1/4 y Prap ad. 2 5 10  
 forward - 385 17 10

D<sup>o</sup>  
 3 1/2 y 4 1/4 sup

D<sup>o</sup>  
 9 y 4 1/4 sup  
 6 Prap stain  
 An oval pl  
 table



Pro<sup>r</sup> J<sup>r</sup> \$287 11 11  
 1823  
 100 lbs Chain  
 100 lbs cushion } 6 16 6  
 100 lbs seats  
 100 lbs } 28  
 100 lbs } 5  
 100 lbs writing  
 100 lbs writing board } 15 4 6  
 100 lbs }  
 100 lbs } 4 10  
 100 lbs }  
 100 lbs } 13 2 6  
 100 lbs }  
 100 lbs } 4 7 6

Dr  
 100 lbs } 2 8 6  
 100 lbs } 7 4  
 100 lbs } 3 3

100 lbs } 1 6  
 100 lbs } 3 17 7  
 100 lbs } 3 5 10  
 100 lbs } 385 17 10

1823  
 7  
 Pro<sup>r</sup> J<sup>r</sup> \$385 17 10  
 100 lbs } 1 5 7  
 100 lbs } 15 9

Pro<sup>r</sup> J<sup>r</sup> \$385 17 10  
 100 lbs } 11 9  
 100 lbs } 1 1 11  
 100 lbs } 1 9  
 100 lbs } 6 8

Dr. Duncan's room  
 100 lbs } 3 12  
 100 lbs } 4 6

Dr. Brown's room  
 100 lbs } 15 9

Dr. Home  
 100 lbs } 2 6  
 100 lbs } 13 6  
 100 lbs } 8 6

forward - \$397 16 -

1823

Nov

8

Throught for

£397 11.

Prof. Veslce's room

34 1/2 y 4/4 carpeting

4/6

7 13 -

6 large brass plate rods containing

24 1/2 yd put

2 yd

1 8 7

Prof. Irving's room

3 1/2 y 7/4 carpeting

4/6

" 15 9

Prof. Wallace's room

13 1/2 y 4/4 super carpeting

4/6

3 . 9

4 brass plate rods

3 1/2 yd - 1/2

" 1 9

A Mahogany reception pembroke  
table

1 17 6

Making fitting & bordering all  
the foregoing carpets

11 17 6

198 y Binding lace for U<sup>c</sup>

2 1 13 -

A strong oak chair padded back  
and padded arms on pillar legs  
with seat round stuffed in black  
leather for Dr. Hopes classroom  
in Decem. 1821

3 15 -

Moved 4 pair green cloth to draw-  
under for table in lobby

1 4 -

A Morian Window Curtain complete  
for Sanctor's house

6 6 -

No 1, 2, &amp; 3 to be deducted amounting

£	430	8	10
	1	17	4
£	428	11	6